**Recommendation Title:** Gait Assessment and Functional Outcomes

**Recommendation Code:** A2

**Category:** Research, Training and Education

**Recommendation**

**Background**

According to data from the 1989 National Health Survey at least 7.7 million adults are physically disabled and approximately 2.4 million people have difficulty walking or performing other functional mobility tasks. Current gait assessments do not necessarily reflect what locomotive difficulties may exist for a given individual in her/his environment. The usefulness of gait assessment in identifying functional limitations will depend to some extent on the specific protocols or testing conditions used. Moreover, the ability of gait profiles to predict future functional status has not been determined. The NCMRR has encouraged the use of movement analysis to establish meaningful functional outcome measures. The specific relationship between gait assessment and functional outcome measures, however, has not been determined.

**Objectives**

1) Determine those gait parameters/variables and protocols which are the best predictors of functional outcomes.

a) Identify gait related measures which relate most directly to improved functional outcomes in a wide array of disease conditions and populations.

2) Determine those gait parameters/variables and protocols which are the best predictors of future functional mobility status.

a) Conduct epidemiological and longitudinal studies to determine/identify gait parameters that are predictive of future functional mobility status.

3) Transfer this information to appropriate locations including:

a) Training gait assessment personnel

Develop fellowship training programs that will provide extensive training and experience in conducting gait assessment which most directly relates to improved functional outcomes.

b) Educating referral sources

Disseminate information regarding the established relationship between gait assessment and improved functional outcomes.

c) Educating reimbursement agencies and policy makers

Provide and disseminate information regarding the established relationship between gait assessment and improved functional outcomes and lobby for appropriate reimbursement.

**Recommended Actions**

Develop long-term funding for the above objectives.