

International classification of functioning, disability and health benefits neurorehab research

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Use of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) has increased significantly over the last decade. The current issue of *NeuroRehabilitation* features a series of insightful articles that provide examples of how the ICF can be successfully implemented in clinical practice and research related to neurorehabilitation, ultimately benefiting patient care.

ICF was endorsed by the 54th World Health Assembly for international use in May 2001 after two decades of systematic field trials and international consultation. It serves as a framework for the description of health and disability states, much as the ICD-10 (International Classification of Diseases) does for disorders, injuries, and diseases.

The multipurpose classification has become a valuable tool that:

- Provides a scientific basis for understanding and studying health and health-related states, outcomes and determinants
- Establishes a common language for describing health and health-related states in order to improve communication among different users, such as [health care workers](#), researchers, policy-makers, and the public, including people with disabilities
- Permits comparison of data across countries, health care disciplines, services, and time

- Provides a systematic coding scheme for health information systems

According to Guest Editors Professor Jan Lexell, MD, PhD, and Associate Professor Christina Brogårdh, RPT, PhD, both at the Department of Health Sciences at Lund University and the Department of Neurology and Rehabilitation Medicine at Skåne University Hospital, Lund, Sweden, ICF has become a valuable tool to increase communication between different users, help clinicians to classify the consequences of a disease or disability, and to plan and evaluate different interventions as of the rehabilitation process. "It is our hope that these articles will broaden and deepen our knowledge of ICF and may serve as an inspiration for clinicians and researchers in their ambition to develop the use of ICF and for future research."

This thematic issue provides explicit examples of how the ICF can be applied within [neurorehabilitation](#) and how the ICF can expand our knowledge of the possibilities that lie within this framework. The articles also highlight certain limitations and challenges with ICF and the need for future research. The authors are all experienced in the area of ICF and have contributed to the knowledge transfer in different disciplines.

Articles in the issue discuss the use of ICF in rehabilitation plans, how it can be used to collect data on the extent of disabilities, and where it can be used to help rehabilitate youths with cerebral palsy. Other contributions are concerned with real-world examples of implementing the ICF for stroke patients and those with traumatic brain injury, and how differences regarding understanding of the concepts of activities and participation in the ICF may confuse communication rather than facilitate it.

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