

## **Impact of physical care tasks on the health of unpaid carers of people with cerebral palsy and similar physical disabilities**

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Physical care responsibilities of unpaid carers (e.g. parents, siblings, grandparents) caring for clients with Cerebral Palsy and similar physical disabilities often extend well beyond childhood creating a significant risk of injury and long term health problems. While manual handling aids and procedures have been introduced as routine practice for paid staff, financial and funding model constraints mean that unpaid carers may receive limited formal training and environmental or equipment modifications which leaves them at risk of ill-health and injury. This study aimed to profile major risks and outcomes associated with provision of unpaid, long term physical assistance for adolescent and adult clients with CP and similar physical conditions. Objectives were to gather population-based information on (a) injury incidence; (b) nature, frequency and progression of injuries and (c) the impact of known risk factors such as characteristics of carers, clients, care intensity and manual handling education and equipment provision. Unpaid carers of adolescents (12-18 years, n=810) and adults (19-110 years, n=630) receiving services through the Cerebral Palsy League were recruited via mailout with a follow up phone call performed to complete data collection. Results showed that physical injury and/or musculoskeletal pain were common and ranged in severity, type and frequency. Most families had access to appropriate equipment, however usage was affected by physical aspects of the home environment and the extent of manual handling education. Results support the need for specific funding for home based manual handling education and equipment programs to maintain the health and care capacity of unpaid carers.