

**The National Center for Physical Activity and Disability and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. (2009). *Exercise with Limb Loss* [DVD]. United States: MOVCO Media Productions**

*Reviewed by Dr. Terry Long, Co-Editor*

For those who are seeking information about exercise, fitness, and active living among persons with disabilities, the National Center for Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD) is the place to start. NCPAD is described on its website as an “information center concerned with physical activity and disability”, but a full description of the resources that NCPAD provides would be extensive and difficult to communicate in this review. It is recommended that anyone who might benefit from knowledge in this area should review this site and familiarize themselves with the resources available to both service providers and persons with disabilities ([www.ncpad.org](http://www.ncpad.org)).

Rather than explore all of NCPAD's available services and resources, this review focuses specifically on NCPAD's collaborative effort with the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago to develop a catalog of disability-specific video resources that focus on exercise. Technically, these videos are not a formal series, and were developed as individual projects through grants from agencies such as the Christopher and Dana Reeves Paralysis Resource Center; however, their content and format is very consistent. The most recent video, entitled *Exercise with Limb Loss* will be profiled below, but several other earlier titles have also been produced, including:

- Exercise Program for Individuals with Spinal Cord Injuries: Paraplegia
- Exercise Program for Individuals with Spinal Cord Injuries: Tetraplegia
- Exercise program for Stroke Survivors
- Teens on the Move: An Exercise Video for Teens with Spina Bifida

### ***Exercise with Limb Loss***

When first considering the possibility of reviewing this video series, and its most recent addition, *Exercise with Limb Loss*, I was a bit apprehensive. After seeing countless exercise videos, designed for both the general public and people with disabilities, most of which tend to be uninformative and less than motivating, there was an expectation that this series may be the same. Fortunately, I found the NCPAD series, and particularly its latest production, to be both educational and engaging. The limb loss exercise video is professionally done with pleasant aesthetics and useful content. This video, like its four predecessors, is broken into sections for 1) precautions, 2) aerobic training, 3) strength training, and 4) flexibility.

The precautions section explores various aspects of safe exercise participation, including proper breathing, monitoring heart rate and exertion, and safe use of equipment. Aerobic, strength training, and flexibility sections are further subdivided into relevant categories. The aerobic section provides actual warm up, workout, and cool down segments that lead the viewer through a full workout. The strength training and stretching section walks the participant through a variety of exercises and stretches, providing guidelines on how each is to be properly done.

A fifth section of the limb loss video that was not included in earlier videos is the “perspectives” section. This section consists of personal testimonials from the video participants, each discussing how exercise and activity is important in their lives and how they have been able to stay actively in engaged in their own recreation interests. This element alone could be a very useful leisure education and community reintegration tool.

What separates this video from many other recorded exercise programs is the educational piece that is persistent throughout all sections. For example, during the actual workout, there are brief periods where the narrator appears in a small window and provides useful information pertaining to topics such as a safety and proper form. There is also discussion regarding specific reasons why exercise is important to individuals who have experience limb loss, such as the prevention of atrophy and muscle imbalance around the area of limb loss. In fact, all of the videos in this series strongly emphasize disability specific considerations. For example, the importance and availability of latex-free equipment is discussed in the video for children with spina bifida, whereas common medication-related precautions are discussed in the video for stroke survivors.

In addition to providing quality information, these videos all demonstrate various level of exercise intensity, as well as multiple techniques or options for performing exercises. This is critical in illustrating to the viewer the universal nature of exercise and the fact that everyone can participate. In particular, it can also be critical in finding a comfort zone for the individual who is coping with the transitions associated with acquiring a disability, or someone who has been sedentary for a long period of time. In short, the presented workouts enable achievement but allow for challenge.

### ***Potential Uses***

These videos have significant usability within both rehabilitative and community-based settings. As pointed out in each video, they are not intended to serve as prescriptive exercise or to replace other rehabilitative programs. Instead, the videos focus on allowing viewers to adopt an active daily lifestyle. In this context, the videos are an excellent information tool for educating about the importance and availability of exercise for all people. As such, therapeutic recreation professionals can use these videos as part of a specific fitness program, as a section of a broader leisure education program, as an introduction to the importance of exercise as the client reintegrates into the community, or as a combination of these applications. Furthermore, outreach and community based programs run through community centers, independent living centers, or other service agencies could utilize these resources in their health promotion efforts. Finally, individuals with disabilities can use these videos on a continuous basis in their daily exercise. As is noted on the NCPAD web site, individuals with disabilities who cannot afford to purchase one of the \$15 videos will be provided with a copy at no cost upon request.

### ***Final Comments***

Without a doubt, the exercise video series developed by NCPAD and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago can be extremely helpful for both service providers and individual participants. The information and level of participation that is presented is definitely applicable to the beginning or intermediate level exerciser. At the same time, various presented adaptations allow for a variety of exercisers to be challenged in a manner that suits the individual.

It should also be noted that there are a variety of other useful resources available from NCPAD. Additional print and electronic resources can be purchased or received for free (see the Webshop at NCPAD.org). In addition, various electronic documents are posted on the NCPAD web site that provide information about a broad array of disabilities and how to provide physical activity to individuals with these conditions. Finally, there are various resources for individuals with disabilities to use to support their active lifestyle such as E-valuator, E-calculators, E-log book, and the E-forum. These resources allow the user access to a variety of health and activity related resources. For example, through these tools, a person can identify potential barriers to physical activity, measure their Body Mass Index, establish and track exercise goals on line, and discuss activity-related topics with others.

These resources can be presented to and used by persons with disabilities, alongside the video resources profiled earlier, as a means of creating a comprehensive information and support system in the area of physical activity and exercise.