

AFTER SALES CARE PROVISION FOR THE HANDY 1 ROBOTIC AID TO INDEPENDENCE

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Introduction

Rehab Robotics Ltd. was formed in 1992 to manufacture, market and provide after sales care for the Handy 1 Robotic Aid to eating and Drinking [1].

The Handy 1 is unique and requires a specialist assessment and service network in order for it to be commercially successful [2], [3].

The economical arguments for using rehabilitation robots within hospitals, rehabilitation centers and school settings are significant. It has been shown by Johnson and Deitz (American Journal of Occupational Therapy Vol. 39, 578-583), that on average, around 3.5 hours per day are spent assisting people with special needs in the activities of eating and drinking. Excluded in this estimate are the hours spent attending to matters of personal hygiene, such as teeth cleaning, shaving and grooming etc.

Systems such as the Handy 1 can significantly save staff time and effort, bringing economical benefits to institutions[2]. Equally important is that the reduction in the workload of the carers means that they are able to spend more quality time with their clients, therefore giving them a greater amount of personal care [4].

Prior to purchasing a Handy 1 system assessments are conducted with each potential client to determine their suitability to operate the Handy 1 successfully [1].

Assessments

Assessments can be arranged for individuals or groups and can be carried out within clients home, school or hospital settings. Also the West Midlands Regional Health Authority operate a special assessment clinic for Handy 1 at the regional rehabilitation center at Selly Oak, Birmingham [1].

Three key factors are taken into account when accessing clients for their suitability to operate the Handy 1 successfully.

1. A suitable switch input should be identified which the client is able to operate easily.
2. The client should have sufficient physical capabilities (head control) to remove food from a spoon presented near to the mouth, i.e., the ability to move the head.
3. At the very least the client should have the intellectual capacity to understand cause and effect, in this

case the concept that if the switch is activated then a spoonful of food will be presented in front of the mouth.

Service prior to purchase

Potential clients receive three visits from the Rehab Robotics staff to determine whether or not the system is suitable. It is important that potential clients have tried the Handy 1 and fully understood the system before considering purchase.

Visit 1

Would include a demonstration of the system, with explanations of how the Handy 1 is controlled, an individual assessment using the criteria laid out above to ensure the system can be operated correctly by the client.

Visit 2

Would allow the client to try out the system and allow the care staff to investigate the care requirements over a trial period of two weeks.

Visit 3

Before this visit both client and care staff will have had time to discuss and think about the implications of using the system on a full time basis. Usually a decision on whether or not to purchase the Handy 1 is made at this point. In either case all services up to this point are supplied free of charge.

Purchase options

Currently the Handy 1 can either be purchased or rented. The purchase price of the Handy 1 system in the UK is currently (September 1996) £3950.00,

and the rental price £99 per month (six months minimum). However if after the rental period it is decided to purchase the Handy 1 system then any rental paid is deducted from the purchase price.

Handy 1 service package

The price of the Handy 1 includes a comprehensive service package which is built specifically around the Handy 1, typically it would comprise of the following:

Delivery

Once it has been decided to purchase the Handy 1 delivery is usually made within 7 days of receipt of the official order.

Training

On the day of delivery a full training program for both client and care staff is undertaken.

It is vitally important that this period of training is carried out correctly. Frustration and loss of confidence in the system will result if either care staff or client are not totally confident in the systems operation once it is left with them [5].

Follow up

Two follow up days are provided free of charge and are designed to iron out any problems either care staff or client may have. The first follow up day is usually 1 week after delivery and the second 5 weeks after delivery, However, these periods are flexible and extra days can be included if necessary.

Call out service and service contract.

Finally, once the system is being used on a daily basis, and both parties are happy we then cease the visits. However included in the cost of purchase is a 48 hour call out service which can be used for breakdowns within one year of purchase. A service contract for year two onwards is available to clients if they wish to use it. As sales of Handy 1 increase and production methods are streamlined it is predicted that there will be a significant reduction in the price of the Handy 1.

References.

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- [4] Topping M J Rehab Robotics. Proceedings of 'Feeding Problems Experienced by People with Cerebral Palsy and Associated Conditions'. Presented at Scope 2-day International Conference (1995)
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