Book of Abstract

Keynote Address

Keynote Address 1: Speaker: Ms. Eileen Siffermann - USA

Title: Standards for Professional Behavior

Professionals are expected to follow standards that support trust, accountability, quality work, and respectful relationships. These standards help professionals build credibility, protect stakeholders, and contribute positively to their organization or field of practice.

Integrity: Act honestly, keep promises, and avoid misleading others. Example: A professional admits an error in a report and corrects it instead of hiding the mistake.

Accountability: Take responsibility for decisions, actions, mistakes, and results. Example: A team member takes ownership of a missed deadline and explains how they will prevent it from happening again.

Competence: Maintain the knowledge, skills, and judgment needed to perform work effectively. Example: A professional completes training to stay current with new tools, laws, or best practices in their field.

Confidentiality: Protect private, sensitive, or proprietary information unless disclosure is required or authorized. Example: A professional does not discuss client information in public areas or share internal documents with unauthorized people.

Respect: Treat colleagues, clients, customers, and the public with dignity and fairness. Example: A professional listens carefully during a disagreement and responds without insults, sarcasm, or dismissive language.

Professional Communication: Communicate clearly, respectfully, accurately, and in a timely manner. Example: A professional replies to an important message promptly and provides complete, accurate information.

Ethical Decision-Making: Follow laws, policies, and ethical principles when making decisions. Example: A professional reports a conflict of interest before participating in a purchasing or hiring decision.

Reliability: Meet deadlines, honor commitments, and produce consistent, dependable work. Example: A professional arrives prepared for meetings and completes assigned tasks by the agreed date.

Objectivity: Make decisions based on facts, evidence, and professional judgment rather than bias or personal interest. Example: A supervisor evaluates employees using documented performance criteria instead of personal preferences.

Continuous Improvement: Seek feedback, learn from experience, and keep improving skills and performance. Example: A professional reviews feedback after a project and applies lessons learned to future work.

Summary: Professional behavior means acting with honesty, responsibility, respect, and skill in the workplace. Professionals build trust by keeping promises, communicating clearly, protecting confidential information, meeting deadlines, making fair decisions, and following ethical standards. They also take responsibility for mistakes, continue learning, and use feedback to improve their work and relationships.

Keynote Address 2: Speakers: Dr. Nurit Neustadt-Noy - Israel & Dr. Laura Bozeman - USA

Title: **The Development of the Profession of Orientation and Mobility Around the World**

Mobility aids such as canes, sticks, hula-hoops, and bamboo poles were used by individuals with low vision/blindness for navigation throughout history. References to these practices appear in ancient Hebrew, Greek, and Chinese texts, highlighting the longstanding need for tools to support independent travel. The systematic use of the cane for mobility was first formally documented in England over 130 years ago; however, widespread adoption of the long cane did not occur until after World War II in the United States, where it became integral to the emerging discipline of Orientation and Mobility (O&M). Following its development, professional training in O&M expanded across North America and Western Europe. Despite this growth, access to O&M training in many regions of the world remained limited until the late 20th century. Financial constraints, limited awareness of the capabilities of individuals with visual impairments, and no recognition of the benefits of independent travel caused O&M training to not be prioritized. This presentation examines the development and global dissemination of O&M, highlighting the social, economic, and cultural factors that influenced its adoption. The presentation also considers ongoing disparities in access to training and the implications for promoting independence and inclusion for people with visual impairments.

Plenary Session - 1

P.1.1. Prof. Nora Griffin -Shirley & Dr. Laura Bozeman - USA

Title: The Voices of Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists who Instruct Individuals with Deafblindness

Six orientation and mobility specialists were interviewed via Zoom to identify unique instructional

strategies and resources used by O&M specialists working with children and/or adults with Deafblindness (DB). Some of the teaching strategies used by participants included obtaining consent to use hand-over-hand instruction, touch-based and kinaesthetic strategies, and technology integration. Participants mainly focused on the importance of Protractile communication, co-presence, and a continuous stream of tactile information, which includes tools like a roller ball to express movement and direction. It was also found that strategies need to be personalized to the individual, permitting learners to explore environments interactively rather than sequentially, and reinforcing independence through collaborative exploration. Participants also identified assistive technology, supports, and communication methods. They stressed the importance of modifying the O&M curriculum for people with DB and being willing to serve these individuals even though the O&M specialist may lack experience and confidence. Future research where O&M lessons for people with DB are observed to document unique instructional strategies and resources taught, and interviewing people with DB about their O&M services they received is warranted.

P.1.2. Prof. Inger C. Berndtsson - Sweden, Leif Sunesson and Bo N. Schenkman, Sweden

Title: Experiences of room acoustics and the importance of hearing in O&M

There is a lack of knowledge regarding how room acoustics affect the O&M of people with visual impairments, and how that influences their perception of rooms. A study aimed at understanding how room acoustics affect the orientation, mobility, and well-being of people with visual impairments has been conducted. Data comprised a quantitative part of questionnaires and a qualitative interview study, both conducted by telephone. Thirteen people with visual impairments (9 women, 4 men) aged 37–64 took part. Here are presented the results from the qualitative part based on a lifeworld phenomenological perspective. Preliminary interpretations revealed that there is a continuum from total unawareness to a developed awareness of room acoustics and the importance of hearing for the experiences of rooms. The perceived room acoustics vary depending on the persons' experiences and how long they have had their visual impairment. Those who have lived with their visual impairment for a long time usually perceive the room directly as a perceptual whole, whilst people who have recently become visually impaired gradually become aware of the room's acoustic details. The findings highlight the need to pay attention to how awareness of room acoustics and hearing could be developed within O&M training programmes.

P.1.3. Dr. Fabiana Perla - USA

Title: From Theory to Practice: A guide for teaching Orientation and Mobility problem-solving skills

While general agreement exists that critical thinking skills are essential for independent travel, planning purposeful and individualized instruction that promotes independent problem-solving may prove challenging. This presentation provides context, guidelines, and specific teaching strategies that can be at once applied when working with students along a continuum of competency levels.

Plenary Session - 2

P.2.1. Prof. Boguslaw 'Bob' MAREK - Poland and Ms. Phia Damsma - Australia

Title: Developing spatial imagery and mental mapping skills through tactile graphics and audio games.

The presenters will demonstrate how two acclaimed Sonokids educational game applications developed for i-Pads and Android tablets in conjunction with tactile resources become effective O&M tools. 'Ballyland Sound Match' (a type of audio memory game), and the Ballyland Code apps (in which children programme various routes of Wheelie - a Ballyland character) are designed to let children explore and build (assistive) technology skills (for example finger gestures) in a safe and engaging environment. But since both apps rely on identification and moving around cells within digital grids similar to those found in maps, they can be used as a meaningful introduction to floor plans and street maps. Absence of tangible points of orientation on tablet screens seems, initially, to be an obstacle in developing spatial imagery of children with congenital blindness. But with sets of Hungry Fingers templates and diagrams, which play the role of tactile 'screenshots', and with Sonokids 3-D replicas of the grid and objects in the coding game, children quickly learn to plan and make conscious choices. Video clips and examples of additional activities will demonstrate how to introduce children to the concept of 'grids' and 'grid language' (top left corner- row 1, column 1), and how the spatial mapping skills developed by the two apps can benefit children in real life situations.

P.2.2. Dr. Justin Kaiser and Dr. Tina Herzberg - USA

Title: Exploring Education Policy and Practice Inequities in Orientation and Mobility Referral Systems

This session explores what influences referrals for O&M assessments and how practices vary in terms of policy, eligibility, and service delivery. Too often, decisions are shaped by inaccurate or incomplete perceptions about what O&M includes and a student's level of independence, which results in students being excluded from O&M services. Frequently O&M specialists are not involved, and other professionals may not be trained to recognize mobility concerns. Students with multiple disabilities or low vision are the most likely to be missed. The session also addresses factors that shape referral practices, including the lack of clear referral standards, staff shortages, and limited resources. Participants will take part in a structured discussion to share what referral looks like in their own regions and settings. The focus will be on identifying common barriers, addressing exclusionary practices, and sharing practical ways to improve O&M referral processes. This interactive session is for professionals, educators, and researchers who want more practical, consistent, and equitable access to O&M services.

P.2.3. Dr. Sean Tikkun USA

Title: Emerging Technology for O&M

In the last three years a number of legacy technologies have been set down. At the same time refinement and reimagining have been undertaken by new companies. AI innovations and new approaches to Human Computer Interface (HCI) have also produced a range of devices to support Orientation and Mobility skills. The development timeline for these new technologies has occurred at an accelerated rate in recent years. This presentation will demonstrate several of these technologies and present a theoretical framework for classifying these devices. An emphasis will be placed on the importance of O&M skills and how each device supports broader or narrower skills of the traveller. The presentation will also address smartphone-based apps and the role they play in the technology landscape. The source of the apps and technology will have a US and European focus.

Plenary Session - 3

P.3.1. Dr. Andrew Dodgson-UK

Title: AI as a Professional Co-pilot from Practice Experience to Future Readiness: Planning the Effective, Responsible Use of AI in Professional Practice

Generative AI is accessible to O&M practitioners, educators and students. It can reduce administrative workload, organise information and support documentation. However, authoritative outputs may conceal inaccuracies, unsuitable assumptions and potentially unsafe recommendations. Its use also raises concerns about confidentiality, bias, professional accountability and erosion of practitioner skills. This practice-based presentation critically examines three applications of generative AI in orientation and mobility practice. Practical examples will demonstrate how AI can help structure routes, identify environmental features for investigation, sequence teaching activities, develop measurable learning outcomes and clarify case records. These benefits will be balanced against limitations. AI cannot verify sensory landmarks, assess changing traffic conditions or determine whether a crossing is suitable for an individual traveller. Similarly, polished lesson plans may remain generic, while professional-looking case notes may distort meaning, introduce unsupported interpretations or invent information. The presentation will consider data protection and introduce the “HUMAN” framework, offering practical safeguards for using AI to enhance their professional practice.

P.3.2. Mrs. Sofie Mangnus & Alies Aarts - The Netherlands

Interactive Workshop (40 minutes)

Title: Resilience training for people with a visual impairment

At Royal Dutch Visio, we offer group resilience training. Target group: Adults with a visual impairment who require support in their resilience in mobility situations and in social situations. Objective of the training; Through this training, people with a visual impairment increase their physical and mental resilience. Independent mobility is important for social participation. People with a visual impairment are offered mobility training to learn how to participate safely and responsibly in traffic. However, going outside, using a cane, or taking public transport is a difficult step for many clients because they feel vulnerable due to their visual impairment. This is partly because they feel vulnerable, literally, as they more easily see themselves as victims of people with bad intentions. Also, it is figuratively vulnerable because they are not (yet) in balance with themselves and life with a visual impairment. Many clients lose self-confidence when faced with (further) vision loss. Setting boundaries with both familiar and unfamiliar people can be difficult.

P.3.3 Prof. Robert Wall Emerson - USA

Title: The Foundations of Orientation and Mobility: Changes from Edition 3 to Edition 4

This presentation will briefly highlight the changes in the Foundations of Orientation and Mobility text from edition 3 in 2010 to edition 4 in 2024. How changes in the textbook reflect changes in the larger field of orientation and mobility will be discussed.

Plenary Session - 4

P.4.1. Ms. Moira Higgerty - South Africa

Title: A Unique South African Model of O&M Service Delivery.

The South African Mobility for the Blind Trust's [SAMBT]mission is to provide independence training to people with a visual impairment in far flung areas of the country where there is none or limited access to such a service. Not unlike 'Doctors without Borders', SAMBT's team of 8 O&M Practitioners live in the communities where they are teaching, during the roll out of each 3-month training programme. This presentation will provide detail into the selection of areas, the roll out of programmes, and how the centrally based office gives support, monitors the work and evaluates the outcomes.

P.4.2. Ms. Thabelo Muofhe - South Africa

Title: Orientation and Mobility Training with a Family of 4, All with Visual Impairment.

The presentation will provide some background information on the family, [3 of whom are blind and 1person has partial vision] and their circumstances prior to the intervention of orientation and mobility services. Based in a remote rural area of South Africa the presentation will provide information on the skills [both orientation and mobility as well as skills of daily living] that were taught, the challenges encountered and the solutions implemented.

P.4.3. Mr. Adam Musinski - Poland

Title: Teaching aids as an effective support in cultivating an active participation of children during O&M classes.

One of the most important factors that guarantee the effectiveness of the teaching process is to capture and maintain a student's interest in the presented content and in the exercises carried out together during classes. How to reach that goal during Orientation and Mobility (O&M) classes? And most importantly, how to connect this goal with achieving more specific O&M goals set along the long way to a better understanding of the surrounding space and to move around in it independently? Teaching aids are an excellent tool for this! With a bit of creativity and knowledge of the student's world, they provide the opportunity to prepare customized solutions based on the child's individual interests and passions. During my presentation, I will provide examples of the use of various teaching aids that help me achieve active engagement and participation of children and youth in the exercises proposed to them during O&M classes in my daily work as a teacher and O&M instructor in Poland.

Concurrent Session- C 1

C.1.1. Ms. Boikhutso Queen – South Africa

Title: Access to Education Through Mobility

Orientation and Mobility training in South African Universities is still a challenge for Students who are visually impaired. Majority of Universities such as Nelson Mandela Metro University, University of Pretoria, Witz, are amongst the Universities in South Africa that do not have Permanent employees of Orientation and Mobility Practitioner, under the Disability unit/ department. The majority depends on reaching out to the organisations with Orientation and Mobility Practitioner through contracts. In 2014, Nelson Mandela Metro University in Gqeberha which previously was known as Port Elizabeth, enrolled students who are visually impaired. It was the first time enrolling students who are blind and had to reside in the students' residential. The University does have a disability unit/support department, however, with no Orientation and Mobility Practitioner to assist students who are visually impaired. In 2024, the Nelson Mandela Metro contracted the Orientation and Mobility Practitioner and that had a positive impact only to the students trained then. Influence of Permanent employed Orientation and Mobility Practitioner will mean access to mobility training in house workshops and awareness to the employees and sighted students.

C.1.2. Dr. Justin Kaiser and Dr. Tina Herzberg - USA

Title: Low to High Tech: Navigating in the Community

Technology is rapidly evolving in today's world, including tools that can be used by individuals who are blind or have low vision when they are traveling. Come join us and explore a variety of tools. Attendees will have opportunities for hands-on experiences with Meta glasses, We WALK smart canes, 360 cameras, Lighthouse Tech Smart glasses, free apps, and a variety of low-tech tools.

C.1.3. Ms. Eileen Siffermann - USA

Title: Ethical Consideration for the O&M Instructor

Professional Codes of Ethics: The discussion centres on professional codes of ethics, emphasizing their importance in guiding the behaviour and decision-making processes of O&M instructors. Ethical Principles and Terms: A review of ethical principles and relevant terminology is conducted to ensure clarity and understanding throughout ethical deliberations. Decision-Making Process in Ethical Situations: The process used for making decisions in ethical situations is examined, particularly in the context of reviewing a case study that presents an ethical dilemma for an O&M instructor. Case Study Review: A case study is presented and reviewed, focusing on how it relates to the provisions and responsibilities involved in O&M instruction.

Concurrent Session- C 2

C.2.1 Dr. Phoebe Okungu - USA

Title: Two systematic reviews focusing on individuals who are deafblind: the need for O & M specialists and identification of effective O & M teaching strategies

Deafblindness (DB) is a disability where individuals have dual hearing and visual impairment. This disability affects communication and mobility in varying degrees, therefore this population benefits from O&M training. Individuals who are DB have difficulties with balance, using auditory or visual senses, and communication with the public, therefore they need O&M instruction to learn to navigate in various environments. In fact, they require adaptations in O&M services for them to receive the most benefit from training.

To document the need for professionals trained to teach this population and to identify evidence-based O&M teaching strategies, two systematic reviews were undertaken. Specifically, Study 1 examined the need for teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVI) and O&M specialists to provide O&M services to individuals with DB. Study 2 identified effective, evidence-based teaching strategies these professionals can use with this population. These research projects used a narrative approach and a case study method. The results confirmed the need for TSVI and O&M specialists to provide O&M services to students with DB and documented teaching strategies. Future research was warranted to further explore what O&M specialists do when they teach O&M lessons to this population.

C.2.2. Mr. Sachin Rizal & Mr. Rashmikant - India

Title: Using Multisensory Strategies for Orientation and Mobility in Persons with Deafblindness: Insights from Lived Experiences

Orientation and mobility (O&M) for Individuals with Deafblindness—characterized by combined vision and hearing loss—requires tailored, multisensory interventions to support safe, independent navigation. Traditional O&M approaches must be adapted to optimize residual senses such as tactile, proprioceptive, vestibular, olfactory, and kinaesthetic inputs. Lived experiences of persons with deafblindness reveal the innovative use of non-visual and non-auditory cues for spatial orientation. For example, tactile mapping, environmental textures, temperature gradients, and olfactory landmarks (e.g., the smell of incense or food) are frequently used to identify locations and pathways. Vibrations from traffic or floor surfaces are also employed to detect movement and directionality. Proprioceptive feedback and muscle memory play a critical role in route learning and obstacle negotiation. These strategies emphasize the importance of individualized O&M training that builds on a person's sensory strengths and real-life experiences. Interdisciplinary collaboration and environmental adaptations are essential to enhance mobility and autonomy. By recognizing and systematizing such multisensory strategies, practitioners can enhance autonomy, spatial cognition, and community participation for persons with deafblindness.

C.2.3 Ms. Dvora Wiseman-Hoter - Israel

Title: The Human Blueprint — Assistive Technology from Policy to Practice

This presentation, delivered by Dvora Weisman-Hoter from the Israeli Ministry of Health, examines the systemic, psychological, and practical dimensions of assistive technology (AT) provision and its impact on user independence. It outlines Israel's 2024 structural healthcare reform, which transfers authority for supplying rehabilitation and mobility devices from the Ministry of Health directly to Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) to eliminate bureaucracy and enhance community-based care.

To optimize provision, the presentation introduces the "Concentric Ecosystem of Care," structuring support across three levels: the human core (wants and capabilities), the immediate envelope (family and environment), and macro factors (policy and tech availability). It also highlights the "Psychological Scales of Assistive Tech," balancing positive drivers like confidence and social connection against emotional barriers such as anxiety, ageist stigma, and denial of need.

Grounding these concepts in empirical evidence, the presentation cites the 2024 Myers-JDC-Brookdale study by Mariela Yabo and Ariel Gorbat. Data reveals that assistive devices improve quality of life for 87% of users and make daily life significantly easier for 82% overall (91% among adults versus 67% among children). Based on these findings, clinical formulas demonstrate that successful outcomes require safe hardware combined with vendor satisfaction, clinician involvement, and tailored fitting. Finally, a three-stage practitioner blueprint

is established, encompassing initial fitting, device selection that reduces reliance on human support, and mandatory vendor training with clinician follow-up

Concurrent Session- C 3

C.3.1. Dr. Nurit Neustadt-Noy - Israel

Title: Integrating Audio Description Methodology as a Tool in: Orientation and Mobility Training for People Who Are Blind and Visually Impaired: A Clinical Framework

Audio Description (AD) is widely recognized as an accessibility service in cultural and media contexts. Professional AD relies on precise, objective, and systematically sequenced language to convey visual-spatial information. These linguistic principles closely align with foundational Orientation and Mobility (O&M) goals, including cognitive mapping, spatial reasoning, environmental analysis, and anticipatory travel skills. It corresponds with Carroll Canter's Dr. Bob Amendale concept validation and visualization. This presentation proposes a clinically grounded adaptation of AD methodology as an instructional tool within O&M practice.

It is anticipated that learners may demonstrate improved anticipatory planning, increased accuracy in environmental recall, and enhanced confidence during independent travel tasks. Qualitative feedback indicated clearer conceptualization of spatial layouts and reduced reliance on reactive prompting. Instructors reported improved consistency and intentionality in verbal guidance. Preliminary observational, suggest measurable instructional benefits.

Positioning Audio Description as an instructional methodology rather than solely an accommodation reframes professional language as a deliberate clinical tool. Integrating structured descriptive techniques into O&M instruction may strengthen spatial cognition, promote independence, and enhance learner confidence. Systematic research is recommended to evaluate effectiveness across diverse populations and settings.

C.3.2. Mr. Peter Lock and Jessica Jarrett - UK

Title: Guide Dogs My Time to Play, Early Years Group Habilitation, Developing Early Skills & Independence.

My Time to Play (MTTP) is a Guide Dogs charitable offer for 0–4-year-olds with a vision impairment. The service provides a structured programme of habitation play-based group activities, delivered in-person in local communities or virtually. It promotes early-years skills development, crucial for independence and Orientation & Mobility. Delivered by Habilitation Specialists, it provides support and equips parents and caregivers with the skills and knowledge to consolidate their child's skills at home. The group setting offers parents peer-to-peer support from other families in similar situations. Parents' feedback has confirmed that MTTP has

reduced feelings of isolation and gives emotional support which is not obtained from more general groups. MTTP ensures children with a visual impairment access earlier interventions from a Habilitation Specialist. Children attending in person have a pre-school Habilitation Assessment, leading to a report that empowers the parent with critical information to aid discussions with Education providers on ongoing support. Families attending virtual delivery, receive an end of programme report detailing observations and next steps. During our presentation we will provide an overview of the programme, assessment process and overview of activities, along with feedback from parents that highlights the value and service impact.

C.3.3. Mr. Archit Shah - India

Title: Mobility – A Key to Success for Blind Persons to Outshine in the Physiotherapy Field

Mobility is a basic skill that enables blind persons to achieve independence, confidence, and professional excellence. In the field of physiotherapy--where analysing movement, interaction to patient, and spatial understanding are main--mobility training plays a life changing role. This article explores how orientation and mobility empower blind individuals to excel in physiotherapy, enhance patient care, and overcome professional hurdles. It points up the need for structured mobility programs in physiotherapy education to create inclusive opportunities and makes clear perceptions of ability.

Concurrent Session- C 4

C. 4.1. Ms. Eileen Siffermann - USA

Title: Credentialing Concepts and Standards for Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Instructors

Orientation & Mobility (O&M) instructors play a crucial role in supporting individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Each country is responsible for establishing its own instructional system and setting requirements for O&M instructors, which are shaped by local educational practices. The standards for O&M programs—including curriculum areas and the qualifications required for specialists—are closely linked to the development of services for people with visual impairments, as well as the unique cultural and economic context of the country. The presentation will address key terms related to professional qualifications and standards, including credentialing, professional certification, registration, licensure, accreditation and code of ethics. It explains the processes and requirements associated with each, highlighting their roles in verifying expertise, ensuring legal compliance, and maintaining quality within regulated professions. Discuss the varied global requirements for the preparation and what is the accepted level of preparation for O&M instructors. Determine the acceptable scope of practice for an O&M instructor.

C.4.2. Mr. Richard Bounds – UK - Interactive Workshop (40 minutes)

Title: "How is the profession protected? Who sets the standards? A discussion about professional bodies and accrediting organisations around the world"

How do service users, employers, and commissioners know that a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist or Orientation and Mobility Practitioner is competent, up to date, and working to recognised standards? In some countries, professional bodies, accrediting organisations, or regulatory frameworks provide assurance through competency standards, continuing professional development requirements, codes of conduct, and fitness-to-practise processes. In others, such structures may be limited or absent. This interactive workshop will explore how professional standards are established, maintained, and monitored across different countries. Participants will be invited to share experiences of professional recognition, registration, accreditation, competency frameworks, and quality assurance mechanisms within their own contexts. The discussion will also consider the potential risks where no formal professional oversight exists. How are standards maintained? How is public confidence protected? What safeguards are in place when concerns arise about competence or conduct? By bringing together international perspectives, the workshop aims to identify common challenges, share examples of good practice, and explore how the profession can best protect both practitioners and the people they serve.

C.4.3. Ms. Ntungufhadzeni Mutele and Mr. Justice Phukubje - South Africa

Title: Supporting Blind and Partially Sighted Students Transition into Institutions for Higher Learning in South Africa

Abstract Access to higher education remains challenging for students with disabilities, especially those who are blind or partially sighted. While university admission is a major milestone, it presents unique transition challenges as these students must adapt to academic life, independent living, and self-care. Many encounter these responsibilities for the first time, often without the support systems of specialised schools. This paper examines the barriers these students face and highlights the importance of robust, timely support from university disability centres. It calls for comprehensive services from both staff and the campus community to ensure a smooth transition. By fostering an inclusive environment, universities can help students with disabilities remain enrolled, participate fully, and complete their studies. The paper also reviews support services available to enhance learning and recommends leveraging these resources from admission onward. Ultimately, the paper concludes that effective support structures are crucial for the retention and success of blind and partially sighted students in higher education.

Concurrent Session- C 5

C.5. Chair Dr B K Panchal - India

Title: Orientation & Mobility Training for People with Visual Impairment

Mobility training is a term used for the combination of two skills -Mobility and Orientation. Mobility is the ability to move in the environment in relation to oneself from one place to another. Orientation is the use of the remaining senses to establish one's location in the environment. The training that teaches the blind to move around the environment freely and independently is popularly known as Orientation and Mobility (0 & M.). Successful mobility training brings many advantages to the trainee. His self-confidence increases and he gets real satisfaction from being able to move independently. His co-ordination of movement is developed and posture is improved. His remaining senses are sharpened through sensory training. A well balanced and efficient travelling ability helps him to obtain work and hold his job successfully. The content of the mobility training differs for a child who is congenitally blind and for adults becoming blind at a later age. The syllabus includes indoor orientation techniques and outdoor orientation techniques. Theoretical and practical knowledge is very essential for gaining expertise. The practical training may be divided into 2 parts. First, pre cane skills which includes sighted guide, trailing, squaring off protective techniques, locating dropped objects etc. Second, basic use of cane includes the grip, arm position, wrist movement, keeping in step, arc of cane rhythm in indoor situations.

The outdoor orientation skills includes travel on constructed path, road having no footpath & on dirt path; road crossing without traffic lights and with traffic lights; use of public transport and public places etc. The content of the training may be moulded according to the need of the client, his situation, his cause and advent of blindness

C.5.1. Prof. Dawn Anderson - USA

Title: O&M with Students with CVI, Screening and Interventions

In the US more than 50% of the students in vision programs have a brain based visual impairment. This has been our fastest growing group of students. O&Ms need evidence-based practices including assessment tools and instructional strategies to effectively meet their needs. Through a national research project, Stepping Up to Technology, we trained vision teams to improve their knowledge and skills in meeting these students' needs using the CVIConnect App. In that process, we also improved our training, knowledge and experiences with individuals with brain based visual impairment. I met with groups of O&Ms across 5 states and in national settings seeking to learn about and improve the resources for O&Ms teaching students with CVI. This session will give a brief description of this student population; the role of the O&M and tools and teaching interventions O&Ms can use to best meet their students' needs. I will also share with you some contacts for individuals who are developing tools and interventions to grow your professional networks in the area of CVI and O&M.

C.5.2. Ms. Ankita Sehdev - India

Title: Beyond Mobility: Building Independent and Dignified Living through Integrated Assistive & Digital Technologies

Independent mobility is a critical pillar of dignified and self-reliant living for persons with visual disabilities, but it cannot exist in isolation. True independence emerges when mobility is integrated with sensory training, daily living skills, education, and digital access. This workshop presents a holistic, curriculum-based approach developed by Ek Kadam Aur Foundation for Education and Health, which positions orientation and mobility as a core enabler within a broader framework of independent living. The session highlights the role of the white cane and sensory training in building spatial awareness, confidence, and safe navigation, while emphasizing that these skills support—rather than replace—other essential life competencies. Participants will explore how activities of daily living (ADL), foundational literacy and numeracy, abacus training, and digital literacy collectively strengthen independent learning and participation in education and employment. A key feature of the workshop will be a live demonstration by a child with visual disability from one of the program's implementation states. Through this demonstration, participants will witness the practical integration of orientation and mobility, sensory training, daily living skills, and assistive digital technology in real-life tasks.

C.5.3. Dr. Michelle Botha - South Africa

Title: Meeting the Support Needs of Orientation and Mobility Practitioners in South Africa:

Orientation and Mobility practitioners face multi-faceted challenges to providing holistic services in South Africa. These arise as they navigate an under-resourced health system, strained referral pathways, complex socio-cultural responses to impairment and rehabilitation, socio-economic inequality, and the emotional toll that visual impairment takes on individuals and families. While practitioners are trained to deliver technical skills in this challenging context, their role includes relational and emotional aspects for which they must also be prepared and continuously supported. These include supporting clients to move through grief, and enabling them to process a new self-concept. They also fulfil an advocacy role as they encounter socio-cultural beliefs about visual impairment within communities. It is also important that practitioners are equipped to safeguard their own emotional wellbeing. Drawing on data from a qualitative study on the support needs and challenges of practitioners, this presentation considers how exposure to principles in critical disability studies, and particularly models from Africa, can strengthen practitioners. An African relational ethic, which many practitioners already intentionally and unintentionally enact, holds potential to support the relational work of orientation and mobility practice in and beyond South Africa.

Concurrent Session- C 6

C.6.1. Mr. Subin Baekhunthod – Thailand

Title: The Development of Orientation and Mobility Instructors with Visual Impairment in Thailand

Orientation and mobility (O&M) services help blind and low vision people travel safely, confidently and independently. In Thailand, qualified O&M personnel remain limited, especially outside major urban areas. This paper presents the development and pilot implementation of a national initiative to train persons with visual impairment as O&M instructors. The program was led by Thailand Association of the Blind with Ratchasuda Institute and Thai Research Institute Foundation, supported by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. The initiative developed an O&M curriculum covering mobility skills, instructional methods, disability rights, peer mentoring, safety management, and supervised field practice. It recognized lived experience as professional knowledge while building competencies in learner assessment, lesson planning, cane techniques, route familiarization, and independent decision-making. More than fifteen instructors completed the training and delivered O&M instruction across Thailand. Preliminary evidence suggests that the model is feasible, acceptable, inclusive, and scalable. Learners valued instruction from instructors with direct experience of blindness, while instructors reported increased confidence and role-model identity. The Thai experience offers a rights-based model for O&M workforce development and service integration.

C.6.2. Ms. Xoliswa Shozi- South Africa

Title: The Long Cane: A Path to Freedom and Self-Reliance

This presentation discusses the journey of a blind client who has gained independence by learning to navigate to a nearby stream and to key areas in his village, using cane skills. Fetching water for drinking, cooking, and washing has empowered him greatly, highlighting the significance of independence in rural areas. It also addresses the challenges he faces while being integrated into the community, emphasizing resilience and adaptability.

C.6.3. Dr. Sean Tikkun - USA

Title: Teaching next generation smart cane to COMS

A number of devices are appearing on the landscape changing the tools available for Orientation and Mobility Travel. One such device is the WeWalk smart cane. The device incorporates several on-device features, a complimentary smartphone app, and a web-based cloud data system. The robust set of tools and systems creates a new dilemma for O&M training. This dilemma contrasts with the well-established and linear training protocols for white cane travel. This session will present findings when implementing these devices in the training of future COMS in graduate university training programs. The devices were included in the

programs after fundamental skills and proficiency with a white cane was established by trainees. The preliminary data will be both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The session will also suggest timing and use of features of the system.

Concurrent Session- C 7

C.7.1. Prof. Yukti Suneel Gupta & Prof. Sujata Bhan - INDIA

Title: The effect of dance and movement therapy on orientation and mobility skills in children with visual impairment

This study investigated the effect of Dance and Movement Therapy (DMT) on the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) skills of children with visual impairment. Children with visual impairment often experience difficulties in posture, balance, spatial orientation, communication, and independent mobility due to the absence of visual input. A quantitative quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test control group design was conducted with 62 children aged 8-15 years with complete visual impairment enrolled in special schools. Participants were randomly assigned to an experimental group receiving a structured three-month DMT intervention and a control group receiving routine instruction. O&M skills were assessed using researcher-developed and validated tools measuring concept development, posture and gait, communication, guided travel, indoor travel, and outdoor travel. Data were analysed using paired t-tests and ANOVA. Results showed significant improvements in overall O&M skills and all six domains among children receiving DMT, with gains retained at follow-up. DMT emerged as an effective intervention that complements conventional O&M training and promotes independence, confidence, and holistic development. Keywords: Dance and Movement Therapy; Orientation and Mobility; Visual Impairment

C.7.2. Prof. Jamie Maffit - PA USA

Title: A Screening Tool for Referral to Blindness and Low Vision Services

Blind and Low Vision (BLV) services play a critical role in promoting functional independence, safety, and overall quality of life for individuals with blindness or low vision. However, many people who could benefit from these services are not consistently identified or referred. This presentation outlines the development, pilot testing, and refinement of the Blindness and Low Vision (BLV) Services Screening Tool, designed to help rehabilitation and healthcare providers identify patients who may benefit from BLV services. The session will also explore considerations for integrating this screening tool into clinical and rehabilitation practices.

C.7.3. Ms. Rashmi Maruvada & Mrs. Annapurna Maruvada - India

Title: Reaching beyond the Classroom: Mobility as a Gateway to Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities"

Inclusive education is not limited to enrolment in school; it requires children with disabilities to access, navigate and participate independently in all aspects of school life. This paper examines mobility as an essential component of educational access, with particular focus on children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Drawing on findings from research on inclusive education, the paper examines physical, informational and attitudinal barriers that affect children's mobility and participation. Inadequate infrastructure, including ramps, lifts, tactile cues and accessible facilities, can restrict movement within school spaces. Similarly, inaccessible learning materials and limited access to assistive technologies can create dependence and restrict participation in classroom activities. Bringing together research evidence and practical insights from special education, the paper argues that mobility must be understood beyond physical movement to include independent access, participation and autonomy. It proposes strengthening accessible infrastructure, teacher preparedness, accommodations and institutional practices to ensure inclusive education.

Concurrent Session- C 8

C.8.1. Ms. Aniek de Smit - The Netherlands

Title: Orientation and mobility skills for children and adolescents

In collaboration with organizations involved in the rehabilitation of visually impaired and blind children in the Netherlands, we have developed an overview of orientation and mobility (O&M) skills for children and adolescents. The document describes the skills for children aged 0–20 and their parents. It is intended for O&M professionals working with children and adolescents. The matrix lists age groups in two-year categorized horizontally. Vertically, for each developmental age, it lists the skills a child needs in O&M to participate in society. Over the course of those two years, the goal is to work toward achieving the described objective. This overview helps professionals in the field of rehabilitation identify where to begin their work. We would like to share these insights with you and discuss them further.

C.8.2. Dr. Tina Herzberg - USA

Title: Advancing Independent Travel Skills: Summer Programs for Youth Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

Weeklong programs held in June 2024 and 2025 provided South Carolina youth who are blind or have low vision with hands-on opportunities to explore a variety of transportation options. The goal was to increase their confidence and skills for navigating community environments independently. Each day travellers engaged in activities, including a scavenger hunt to locate buildings on a college campus, using Aira at a store, hiring a driver to take them to a specific destination, shopping in a mall, ordering and paying for a meal in a restaurant, going to the airport and boarding a "flight to nowhere", bowling, and team building activities. By using hired drivers, rideshare services, public buses, and taxis, participants increased their confidence and competency traveling in a variety of community settings. In addition, they received individualized O&M instruction to work on skills such as determining when it was safe to cross a street, locating addresses in a business area, crossing lighted intersections, and soliciting assistance in

the community. Post program assessments demonstrated measurable skill gains and follow up interviews three months later showed that each participant was actively applying the skills they had learned during the program. Program materials will be shared with attendees.

C.8.3. Mr. Sannyashai Kumar Behera - India

Title: Enabling Independent and Safe Travel for Blind Persons

Key Findings: Effective O&M needs individualized, structured and evidence-based training that develops.spatial awareness, route planning, environmental interpretation, risk assessment, and adaptive problem-solving. Technology can enhance safety and navigation but should complement, rather than replace, foundational O&M skills. Early intervention is particularly important for children, while adapted approaches are needed for older persons experiencing vision loss. Major barriers include limited availability of trained O&M professionals, inadequate services in rural and remote areas, inaccessible infrastructure, attitudinal barriers, and gaps in assistive technology access.

Conclusion: O&M should be integrated as a core part of rehabilitation, inclusive education, and vocational development. Expanding professional capacity, strengthening community-based models, improving access to affordable assistive technologies, and creating barrier-free transport and built environments are essential for realizing the right to personal mobility. A coordinated approach involving governments, rehabilitation professionals, organizations of persons with disabilities, communities, and technology developers can enable persons with visual impairment to travel safely, independently, and with dignity.

Concurrent Session- C 9

C.9.1 Dr. Francis BOE- France

Title: The A.I. brings tools that transform everyday life blind or visually impaired people

It is obvious that all these A.I. tools cannot and should not be combined, choices must be made, because some have almost similar functions, and they must be chosen because of the desired uses, the conveniences, the facilitations of learning, especially about costs, and about the capabilities and needs of each person. In fact, we wanted to cite possible tools, not exhaustive of course, to show their usefulness and their scope of application. But we wanted to show that the arrival of AI, and the accessibility of its applications and their uses allow blind or visually impaired people of all ages, young and old, at school, at work, in leisure time, educational activities, sport, blind/sighted relationships (social bond), in the family and others etc., to achieve greater autonomy, access to culture, knowledge, exchange, travel, the environment…true educational, social, family, sporting inclusion, etc.

C.9.2 Ms. Petro Grove - South Africa

Title: O&M and OT Collaboration to Support Optimal Mobility Independence and Safety Orientation and Mobility:

In South Africa, O&M's are starting to work more closely with OT's than ever before due to a change in our legislation which came into effect in 2026. While the collaboration between these two professions was welcomed by O&M's on one end of the continuum, the idea of being "supervised" after having years of experience was equally **frowned upon** on the other end of the same continuum.

This presentation showcases how the collaboration between O&M and OT brought on new perspectives for both occupations. It provides valuable insights on how ***"The 6th Sense in Mobility – Proprioception"*** affects a wide range of our clients (particularly those with Diabetes and Neurological Disorders) in terms of their mobility, safety and independence. Moreover, practical guidance is provided along with the scientific reasoning supporting its efficiency.

[The presentation will be dedicated to O&M Mr Nape Mashiane, who passed on tragically in a road accident on 27 September 2026. If he had not been open to invite his OT "Supervisor" (Colleague) to a collaborative assessment with one of his Diabetes clients, these insights may still have been mostly book knowledge for many practitioners.]

C.9.3. Ms. Mpilonhle Buthelezi - South Africa

Title: O&M Core Training: Cane Designs, Methods of Assessing and Optimizing Mobility

This presentation explores the role of Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training within Core O&M services, with a specific focus on the prescription and use of the long cane for individuals with visual impairments. The presentation will highlight the importance of comprehensive O&M assessment prior to cane prescription and emphasise why cane selection and training should be conducted by qualified Orientation and Mobility practitioners. Key areas of discussion will include the functional purpose of the long cane, factors considered during assessment, and the impact of appropriate cane prescription on independent mobility, safety, and quality of life. Different types of canes and their respective functions will also be explored, together with considerations influencing the selection process for individuals with varying visual needs and mobility goals. The presentation aims to strengthen interdisciplinary understanding among professionals working within visual impairment services, including occupational therapists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, and organisations serving persons who are blind or visually impaired. Ultimately, the session seeks to reinforce best practice principles in Orientation and Mobility service delivery and promote collaborative, client-centred care.

Concurrent Session- C 10

C.10.1 Mr. Hunny Bhagchandani, India

Title: Affordable Assistive Innovations Transforming Independent Mobility for the Visually Impaired: Saarthi Smart Cane and Jyoti AI Pro Glasses

Globally, over 253 million visually impaired individuals face challenges in mobility due to the lack of accessible, accurate, and affordable solutions. Torchit, a social enterprise from India,

introduces two game-changing technologies—Saarthi Smart Mobility Aid and Jyoti AI Pro Smart Glasses—to bridge this gap and empower users with true independence. Saarthi is a universal mobility attachment that converts any white cane into a smart cane, using real-time vibration feedback. With three operational modes (2ft, 4ft, 8ft), 99.7% obstacle detection accuracy, and 30-day battery life, it is intuitive, ergonomic, and requires minimal training. Jyoti AI Pro enables users to read printed content in 34+ languages, translate in 100+, and digitize documents—supporting education, employment, and daily living. Its modular design allows use on glasses, clothing, or as a desk reader, requiring no charging. Together, these devices have impacted over 400,000 users, offering enhanced safety, confidence, and inclusion. This interactive session will demonstrate their real-world impact, share success stories, and invite collaboration from global mobility experts to scale inclusive solutions for all.

C.10.2. Ms. Camilla Madsen – Denmark; and Ms. Susanne Borglit - Denmark

Title: VR for Orientation and Mobility

How can a VR headset benefit people with low vision in terms of orientation and mobility? Through the Erasmus+ project VR4Mobility, we tested this by creating 360° videos of various routes and areas to help with orientation and mobility. The aim was to test whether users felt better able to navigate a route after first orienting themselves to it through the VR headset. In this workshop, the project consortium, represented by the Danish partner IBOS - The Danish Institute for Visual Impairment, will demonstrate how we, as O&M instructors, work with the VR headset and discuss what we learnt from practicing it with the users. We will also talk about how we included O&M instructors around Denmark and gave them the opportunity to gain experience using VR for orientation and mobility. We would like to invite people working in O&M to try out the headset to see a route or an area, and to discuss the benefits and challenges of using VR headsets in O&M training.

C.10.3. Prof. Robert Wall Emerson – USA & Mrs. Doaa Mabrouk - Egypt

Title: O&M training in Egypt: Development of a training program

This presentation will describe the development of an O&M training program (as well as VRT and CLVT programs) in Cairo. The curriculum is based on course curricula from Western Michigan University, adapted for Egypt but maintaining content and standards to allow graduates to sit for the ACVREP certification exam. The discussion will illustrate the need for O&M instructors in Egypt, Baseera Foundation worked to address the need through the development of these training programs, and what results have been realized in the first two cohorts.

Plenary Session - 5

P.5.1. Prof. Nora Griffin-Shirley & Dr. Laura Bozeman - USA

Title: Success Strategies Employed by Blind O&M Specialists

Over 5 years four studies were conducted exploring the teaching strategies, accommodations, and equipment blind O&M instructors use to teach O&M to individuals who are blind. Specifically, the following will be discussed: • content used by faculty in university O&M programs to train students who are visually impaired enrolled in blindfold simulation cane courses • strategies implemented by university blind O&M students to monitor O&M skills and to ensure the safety of their fellow students • teaching strategies used by blind O&M instructors when providing O&M services to their students with visual impairment. The implications of these four studies are the provision of guidelines for O&M personnel preparation program faculty who are teaching students with visual impairment in their blindfold/simulation cane courses; and the development and implementation of a technical standards document all prospective university O&M students' signatures. Additionally, prospective students who are visually impaired can reflect on their travel abilities and identify areas in which they may need additional instruction. The participants reported that they safely teach and monitor O&M instruction to individuals who are visually impaired in dynamic environments.

P.5.2. Ms. Ruthie Lang - Israel

Title: Orientation and Mobility in Times of Emergency

An emergency is an external situation that threatens life and disrupts the functioning of individuals, families and communities. In such conditions, individuals cannot rely on routine orientation and mobility (O&M) strategies and must adapt to rapidly changing and unpredictable environments. War, an extreme form of emergency, includes sirens, missile strikes and destruction that directly affect the O&M of individuals with visual impairments. It creates environmental disruptions such as reduced access to transport and public, educational, and leisure services; behavioural changes including sleep deprivation and diminished support systems; and emotional responses such as heightened stress and anxiety. Together, these factors significantly impact safe, independent travel in familiar and unfamiliar environments. During the recent war in Israel, O&M training was delivered primarily through remote instruction, with an emphasis on safe navigation to nearby protected shelters. Training also addressed functional daily living needs, including online shopping, social participation, and access to emotional support. When feasible, in-person sessions were conducted with careful, ongoing risk assessment. These adaptations align with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, underscoring that physiological and safety needs must be secured before higher-level mobility goals may be addressed.

P.5.3. Prof. Kazunori Minatani - Japan

Title: Integrating Tactile Architectural Models and Floor Plans Using 3D Printing: From an experience of Exhibition at the Osaka Kansai Expo

Understanding floor plans is essential for people with visual impairments. At the same time, understanding a building's exterior is also important for appreciating its artistic value. For these reasons, there is a need for tactile materials that integrate a map for understanding floor plans

with a model for understanding a building's exterior. The Osaka Kansai Expo was held in Osaka city, Japan, in 2025. A consortium of Japanese companies dedicated to supporting people with visual impairments (the Vision Consortium) exhibited at this expo. At the request of that Consortium, the author created a model of the exhibition pavilion "Gallery West." The model was displayed at the entrance to the venue. The model was designed so that visitors could understand the overall shape and the floor plan at once. Since the expected visitors include many sighted persons, including young children, the model must withstand the rigors of unfamiliar tactile exploration. Through this presentation, the audience can learn: Techniques for creating tactile architectural models that allow simultaneous understanding of both interiors and exteriors: Key points for producing robust and safe tactile objects capable of withstanding use by a diverse, unspecified audience.

P.5.4. Dr. Bhushan Punani - India

Title: Mobility & Human Guide during situation like Covid (Ebola) & Mobility of the Blind

As human touch is ruled out during situations like, we need to evolve special mobility techniques which enable a person with visual impairment to these techniques without a human touch. The ICEVI India took up the challenge of developing While Cane as well as Human Guide Technique enabling such techniques without requiring any human touch. The Researcher sought feedback from mobility experts around the world in this regard. Based on the feedback developed a prototype of the technique and shared the same with these experts. Based on these inputs, the Researcher developed a video on the 9 steps to be followed in case of White Cane Technique and 6 steps to be followed in case of Human Guide Technique. The Researcher also enlisted various precautions to be taken during such situations like Covid. The researchers would like to present 2 videos, one on "Mobility Technique during Covid or similar conditions" and 2nd on "Reverse Human Guide Technique". After the presentation, the researcher would prove both the techniques with the help of volunteers. The research would like to make recommendations Links for Videos: Mobility: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYBLCyMCgaI
Human Guide Technique: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLw6OPABuT4

Valedictory:

Keynote Speaker: Prof. Inger Berndtsson - Sweden

Title: Embodied Education in the field of O&M

The practice of O&M is, by its very nature, linked to bodily activities, a fact that is often taken for granted. However, if we wish to identify the various aspects involved in O&M training and practice, particularly those that promote the independent use of the long cane, it is important to discuss the embodied aspects associated with the learning activities. To understand the learning processes related to O&M, the phenomenological theory of the lifeworld has a potential to shed light on how different dimensions are interwoven in concrete learning situations. The presentation will focus on existential aspects related to the white cane, but also to its social function and how it evokes feelings of being different and contributes to a changed identity.

Another aspect of embodiment is how the long cane becomes integrated into one's own body and, through prolonged perception, helps to broaden one's world. The long cane contributes to a new habitual body and to engaging with the new world through activity. Another aspect of embodied learning is how O&M specialists understand the difficulties a person faces in using a long cane, but also how they by themselves relate to the cane and their own feelings about it.

Speaker: Dr. Arvind Agarwal - India

Title: Vision of Space, Vision of Time: A Roadmap for Self-Discovery and Character Safeguarding

Standard definitions define vision by space—the physical distance a person can see. Yet, if we analyze carefully, modern society deeply suffers with another deficiency, namely "vision of time." In this deeply reflective keynote, the speaker draws upon personal trials navigating careers with 15% vision, and vision of time culminating to a collection of frameworks that redline the boundaries of human capability. The talk introduces the concept of temporal sight—the capacity to foresee the long-term consequences of current actions on the timeline of life, leadership, and systemic governance. By exploring cultural frameworks of Cause and Effect (Karma), the talk illustrates how traveling through time in one's mind alters how we perceive our current situations, factors, limitations, and choices. The speaker challenges modern institutions to shift focus from merely accommodating physical limitations to curing the widespread moral shortsightedness afflicting everyday living. The session offers an audacious, foundational roadmap capable of character safeguarding for generations to come. It concludes with an invitation to visually impaired individuals to elevate their self-perceptions and self-definition, demonstrating that while space separates us, an expanded vision of time empowers us all.