



MAY 12-16 2025 · CHICAGO, IL USA · REHABWEEK.ORG



Category: Development of Technology

Workshop Title: Incorporating Lived Experience in Rehabilitation Engineering Research

Organizer(s): James Samuel Sulzer

Speaker(s): Roger Gassert, ETH Zurich
Rory Cooper, University of Pittsburgh
Mark Waschak, Experience Expert
Ian Burkhart, North American Spinal Cord Injury Assoc
Maureen Linden, NIDILRR
Melissa Miller, Dept of Defense, CDMRP
James Sulzer, Case Western Reserve University
Tracey Wheeler, Craig H. Neilsen Foundation

Workshop Time: 08:15 - 09:45

Attendee Engagement: Each of the 6 planned sessions will be fully interactive during the panels and speakers, 33% of the workshop is dedicated towards group discussions that highlight critical questions. We will use Mentimeter to make the oral presentations more interactive. Since the goal of the workshop is to develop a set of guidelines for inclusion in rehabilitation this group discussion is a cornerstone of the workshop.

Abstract: Recent efforts in rehabilitation engineering research include incorporating lived experience of individuals with (physical) disabilities. However, effectively incorporating individuals with lived experience into the research process remains challenging, and only few funding agencies require such inclusion. Researchers often lack training in engaging end-users, who are typically not educated in research methods. We aim to address these challenges by exploring the value, barriers, and best practices for incorporating lived experience into rehabilitation engineering research. Roger Gassert and James Sulzer, both seasoned RehabWeek participants and current and former Keynote speakers, respectively, have unique perspectives on this issue. In the past 5 years, each have become members of the disability community under different circumstances. Their personal experiences have given them new insights into disability inclusion, which they now advocate for in their research. This workshop is a direct result of these new insights.

The workshop will cover:

- a) the value of lived experience in research,
- b) insights from individuals with and without lived experience,
- c) challenges and practical approaches for inclusion,
- d) the perspective of funding agencies on inclusion,
- e) engagement research courses, and
- f) the integration of inclusion principles into engineering curricula.

We have confirmed participation from lived experience advocates, researchers, and funding agency program managers.

We request a 180-min session to accommodate the: 1) widespread relevance of the topic to all RehabWeek participants, 2) urgency and timeliness of this topic, 3) broad scope of issues and distinguished speakers, and 4) organizers' unique position as researchers who bridge both sides of the disability community. This workshop will be a pivotal event, serving as a foundation for developing actionable guidelines for meaningful inclusion across rehabilitation engineering research.