

What is Left to Say About Cerebral Palsy in the 21st Century

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Peter Rosenbaum is the 2009 awardee of the Peter Emil Becker Prize of the Gesellschaft für Neuropädiatrie. He is certainly a most outstanding researcher in the field of cerebral palsy and contributed significantly to the clarity in what can be said about cerebral palsy.

Prof Peter Rosenbaum from the Mc Master University in Canada is a developmental paediatrician and researcher in childhood disability.

He graduated from McGill University, did his internship and resident's training at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. He then went for three years to Great Ormond Street (Institute of Child Health, London).

Since 1984, he is Professor of Pediatrics at McMaster and since 2007, Director of McMaster Child Health Research Institute.

Since 2001, he holds a Canada Research Chair in Childhood disability.

In 1989, he created with 'like-minded' colleagues what is now CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research.

He has published 199 peer reviewed papers and was/is involved as principle or co-investigator in 73 research projects (which corresponds to funding of several millions of Canadian dollars).

Since 1970 he is invited speaker and gives key note lectures virtually all over the world from Reykjavik to Sydney and Tel Aviv to New Delhi.

These facts illustrate the life of a passionate and most stimulating researcher.

One of his great achievements was to set an end to the terms 'mild, moderate and severe' in the characterization of a child with CP without any additional parameters to define the meaning of this. These terms are most subjective and non comparable if not defined further.

He was one of the first not only to describe but also to measure childhood disability. And GMFCS (gross motor function classification system), GMFM (gross motor function measure) are among the most used and most wide spread scores. The longitudinal data collection with these instruments led to the creation of motor development curves which allow the prognosis for gross motor function in children with cerebral palsy. It is, thus, an enormously helpful tool for the clinician – it may help to encourage families and therapists, but also to set realistic long term goals.

It is also a tool to better understand disabilities such as cerebral palsy in their different facets. It characterizes the motor function groups in CP, which is an important basis also for discussions how to support families, how to inform practitioners or policy people, how to communicate the 'bad news' of a chronic disease, a disability.

His intellectual curiosity paired with a great consistency in what he is doing makes him a 'Vorbild', a model for colleagues, coworkers and students, and fellow pediatricians.

The Gesellschaft für Neuropädiatrie, therefore, has honoured his important contributions to the field which have a great impact on the pediatric neurologist's concept when diagnosing and also treating children with disabilities.

Bibliography

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