

Abandonment of Assistive Technology

When Assistive technology (AT) is not appropriate for a person's environment or it does not meet their needs, they are more likely to stop using it.



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What is abandonment?

Abandonment occurs when a person stops using a device. There may be a number of reasons for this. On average, 30% of AT is abandoned within one year of receiving the product.

For the user, abandonment of AT can result in a lost opportunity for improving quality of life, and can lead to frustration and poor psychological outcomes.

For the service provider, there is a loss of resources and increased environmental waste, particularly when abandoned AT is unable to be recovered, reused or recycled.

As the rates of non-communicable disease and disability increase, and global populations age, it is likely that there will be more demand for AT products. Therefore, the issue of abandonment is a significant social and economic issue that needs to be considered by service providers.

What causes abandonment?

Abandonment results from an interaction of four major factors, which include:

1. **Personal factors:** age, gender, acceptance and understanding of diagnosis, changes in health, mental health, changes in personal situation.

2. **Device factors:** poor design or assembly, quality of product, durability, appearance, weight, transport difficulties, function.
3. **Environment factors:** social support, discrimination, physical barriers.
4. **Service delivery factors:** user participation, user training, follow up support, poor prescription, poor fitting, poor adjustment, device causes pain.



What can services do to reduce abandonment?

Satisfaction with a service is as important as satisfaction with a device in reducing abandonment.

Strategies that can help to prevent abandonment include:

- **Client-centred approach:** promoting the user's involvement in all decisions leads to greater satisfaction and fewer issues.
- **Quality service delivery:** having structured approaches to service

delivery and ensuring quality support leads to greater use of AT.

- **Follow up:** home visits and follow up help to support changes in the user's condition and any need for maintenance, user training or device adjustments.
- **Quality products:** talking with suppliers and donors to advocate for appropriate, quality products minimises device issues.
- **Peer support:** connecting people with other users helps them in decision making and with acceptance of their AT.
- **Client education:** Better education allows clients to make informed decisions reducing the likelihood of abandonment.
- **Professional development:** continuing training of personnel will give them the necessary skills for quality service delivery.
- **Advocacy:** integrating AT, accessibility and inclusion into public policies will help overcome social and environmental factors that increase abandonment.

