

## How are needs of students with physical disabilities met in regular school system in Slovenia

Lea Šuc<sup>1</sup>, Urša Bratun<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Health Sciences, Ljubljana, Slovenia, <sup>2</sup>West Middlesex University Hospital, London, United Kingdom

### Introduction

A growing number of children with special needs are included in regular school programmes in Slovenia. Although the need for environment-centred assessments and intervention strategies in the area of school-based occupational therapy (OT) practice has been highlighted (Clark & Miller, 1996; Hemmingsson & Borell, 1996), no assessment instrument that would include aspects of the physical and social environment has been used in Slovenia to this day.

### Objectives:

The aim of the study was to identify the needs for environmental adjustments in mainstream schools as perceived by students with physical disabilities who attend them. We analyzed the relationship between OT intervention, gender, mobility, diagnosis, academic level, presence of an assistant, and student- environment fit.

### Methods

58 students with physical disabilities, aged 10 to 19, participated in the study. The School Setting Interview (SSI) was used to collect the data. The data was analyzed using descriptive and non-parametric statistics. Mann-Whitney U-test was applied to ascertain whether there were any systematic differences within the group of students related to the number of needs and to the proportion of needs met.

### Results

Students attending primary school, students using a wheelchair, those with access to an assistant and students receiving OT needed significantly more environmental adjustments in the school than did students from secondary school, students who were walking, who did not have an assistant and did not receive OT. Furthermore, significantly more needs were met by the schools in the group of students receiving OT, using a wheelchair and students with an assistant than were with other students with physical disabilities.

Slovenian mainstream schools were most successful in meeting students' needs in the areas of taking exams and doing homework.

### Conclusion

SSI was a useful tool for assessing and intervention planning.

One important finding of this study was that more needs were met when there was an OT involved with the student.

### Contribution to practice

In Slovenia, OT have limited opportunities to access the students in the school environment and are mostly approached on consultation basis only. This study could promote the work of OT in the school setting in Slovenia.