



Enhancing safety and reducing strain for paediatric therapists



Therapists who work with children often need to support them during therapeutic exercises by using their bodies to help the child maintain balance or guide movements.

Research has shown that repetitive tasks, uncomfortable postures, and heavy loads are the primary risk factors for work-related musculoskeletal disorders among therapists (1). Paediatric therapists, in particular, frequently kneel, sit on the floor, or

bend into awkward positions to assist children during therapy sessions (2).

The physical demands of the job can increase the risk of injury, and sick leave, and even lead to career changes due to chronic pain. For this reason, more therapists are using ceiling hoist systems, that reduce their physical burden and enhance their ability to engage with the child.

Penny Townsend, an experienced paediatric physiotherapist specialising in neurodevelopmental therapy, has wit-

nessed firsthand how ceiling hoists can transform the child's progress and the therapist's working conditions. Penny works with children of varying abilities, many of whom rely on aids like wheelchairs or walking frames.

According to Penny, the hoist allows her to fully engage with the child without having to act as their primary physical support. In her words:

"The ceiling hoist gives me flexibility during sessions. I can focus on the child's movements, provide better

guidance, and make adjustments without the strain of supporting their weight for extended periods.”

Other paediatric therapists are also noticing the benefits of ceiling hoists. Anne, an occupational therapist with extensive experience in working with special needs children, explains:

“With the child supported by the hoist, I can focus on using other tools—such as sensory toys and exciting surfaces—that motivate the child to move. The system frees my hands and attention, allowing me to promote the child’s self-driven movement.”

Her colleague Ditte, a paediatric physiotherapist specialising in home training for children with special needs, shares her experience:

“As a therapist, it’s important that I’m not positioned behind the child, acting as their physical support. The ceiling hoist allows me to make eye contact, engage with them on their level, and have my hands free to guide them in ways that promote their independence.”

Ditte emphasizes that this benefits the child by encouraging self-driven movement and protects her from the repetitive strain of constantly lifting and adjusting young patients.

Ceiling hoists are indispensable for minimizing the risk of musculoskeletal disorders among therapists by safely supporting the child’s weight. The hoist provides superior ergonomic support for the child and the therapist during activities such as walking, balance exercises, or four-point kneeling.

Furthermore, it’s truly remarkable how the hoist can completely transform the interaction and dynamic between the patient and the therapist, ultimately enhancing the overall therapeutic experience.

References

(1) Shah MK, Desai RG. Prevalence, risk factors and prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders in physiotherapist according to their specialization - a review. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2022; 9(3): 485-495. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20220354>

(2) Atia, D. T., Abdelazeim, F. H., & Radwan, H. Impact of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders on Egyptian Pediatric Physical Therapists: One-Year Follow-Up Study. *Trends in Applied Sciences Research*. 2015; 10(3), 175-182. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3923/tasr.2015.175.182>

