



Ekso Rounds



The “FirstStep initiation mode“

Sometimes you need to take one step back, to get 2 steps further!!

As you know, the Ekso GT has multiple step initiation modes/walking modes and a variety of assistance options. These options allow you to support all different kinds of patients in the SCI and stroke field through most of their rehabilitation chapters, with a high degree of efficiency.

In this clinical tip, we will give you examples of how the “FirstStep” initiation/walking mode, is NOT a “step back” for the patient – but in fact the key to bring your patient to the next ambulatory level.

Ekso therapy is based on the idea that, PTs can positively influence the process of Gait Rehabilitation with a high quality outcome, by using the functionality of the device. We all love to work with “ProStep” or “ProStep +” as it seems more efficient for the PT and the patient. However, this can lead to a lot of physical effort for the PT, if the patient is not yet ready for that initiation mode. We often find that the therapist’s motivation to progress into “advanced step initiation/walking modes” like “ProStep” and “ProStep+” , does not match the ability of the patient to properly balance and maintain the center point of gravity on the base of support, when weight-shifting. The result is that the therapist has to use a lot of physical effort to control or hold the patient while walking the patient in Ekso.

We want to encourage you to not underestimate the “FirstStep” initiation/walking mode. By choosing “FirstStep” you can provide the suitable time frame for the patient to coordinate and focus on a proper weight-shift and truly learn their balance point, before the PT triggers the step on the controller. This can be especially helpful with patients who have pusher syndrome or impaired midline orientation.

One of the most challenging sequences, is when the patient is shifting the center of gravity from stance phase on the trailing limb to the front leg. In First step you can leave the patient in the gait sequence and work on the weight shifting (front foot – back foot – front foot- and so on)without triggering the next step, just like you would in conventional gait therapy. There will be no reminder from Ekso to bring the feet together because you are in an active walking mode. This is a great opportunity to work on part to whole training. It can be helpful to combine this with other therapy methods such as mirrors and tactile cues. Keep in mind that gait rehabilitation is about the quantity of steps – but in a good quality!!

To progress out of first step, you want to **like what you see**, then **like what you hear**

- **Like what you see.** In “FirstStep”, the PT assists the patient to achieve quality walking. Don’t trigger a step until the patient has achieved and learn the proper balance point. Spend as much time as you need to in this mode for the patient to learn.
- **Like what you hear.** Decrease the targets by 1 until they are consistently achieved when the patient is stable over their stance leg. If they target sound match when you think the step should happen, then you can progress to “ProStep” or “ProStep+”

Have any questions?

Please reply to
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to communicate with an Ekso
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