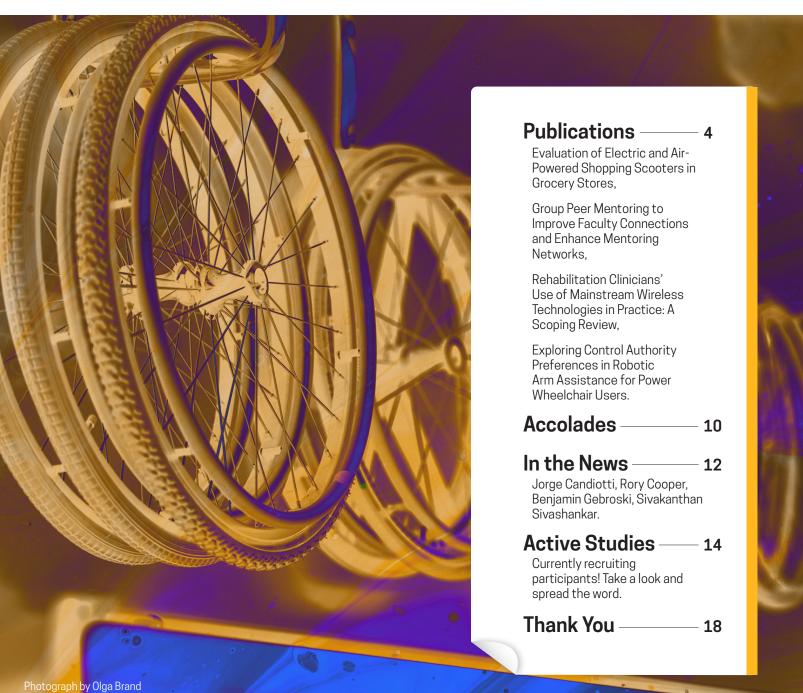
Human Engineering Research Laboratories VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System 6425 Penn Ave, Suite 400 Pittsburgh, PA 15206

# HERL QUARTERLY

■ VOLUME 23, NO. 1 JANUARY - MARCH 2024





# HERL HIGHLIGHT Jessica Steinberg

Research Engineer

essica's role at HERL is to design, fabricate and test various assistive technology and medical devices. She received a bachelor's degree in bioengineering from the University of Pittsburgh Swanson School of Engineering in 2023, and now she is pursuing a part-time master's degree in mechanical engineering. In her free time, she enjoys gardening and working on random hobby projects in her workshop.

In March of 2024, Jessica and undergrad co-op Danielle Scott placed second in the University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences' *Innovation Challlenge*.

"After many weeks of customer discovery interviews and many months of designing and fabricating the Kirigami Wheelchair, I'm excited to announce that we were awarded \$30,000 in the SHRS Innovation Challenge! This funding will allow us to further the development, testing, and ultimately the comercialization of the Kirigami Wheelchair."



- Jessica Steinberg Research Engineer Human Engineering Research Labs



## Publications Manuscripts



## **Evaluation of Electric and Air-Powered Shopping Scooters in Grocery Stores**

Motorized shopping scooters are in high demand and used by a wi de variety of individuals, yet electric-powered scooters are commonly unavailable due to having dead batteries or all the devices being in use. Air-powered scooters may serve as a practical replacement for the current electric-powered scooters found in grocery and retail stores.

Brandon J. Daveler, PhD; Benjamin Gebrosky, BS; Ian J. Eckstein, MS; Garrett G. Grindle, Ph;, Rosemarie Cooper, MPT; Rory A. Cooper, PhD (2024). Evaluation of Electric and Air-Powered Shopping Scooters in Grocery Stores. *American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation*.



#### Group Peer Mentoring to Improve Faculty Connections and Enhance Mentoring Networks

We found the peer mentoring program feasible to establish and an effective way to increase faculty feelings of connection and support. This is similar to other studies involving peer mentoring, but is novel in involving an entire departmental faculty rather than smaller specialized groups, and in a completely virtual meeting format as nearly all other described programs describe in person meetings.

Karen P. Barr, MD; Kerry Deluca, MD; Brad E. Dicianno, MD; Wendy M. Helkowski, MD; Betty Liu, MD (2024). Group Peer Mentoring to Improve Faculty Connections and Enhance Mentoring Networks. *The Clinical Teacher*.



4





#### Rehabilitation Clinicians' Use of Mainstream Wireless Technologies in Practice: A Scoping Review

MWT such as apps, smartphones and tablets are being used by rehabilitation clinicians to address motor, cognitive, and speech skills, most commonly in adults. Clinicians voice a need for more education and training. Barriers and facilitators exist at the clinician-, technology-, client-, institution-, and policy levels.

Brad E. Dicianno; Angad Salh, Lindsey Morris; Yifan Xiang; Dan Ding (2024). Rehabilitation Clinicians' Use of Mainstream Wireless Technologies in Practice: A Scoping Review. American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation.

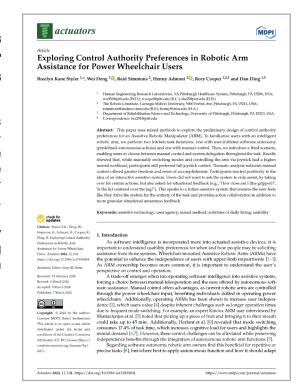


#### Exploring Control Authority Preferences in Robotic Arm Assistance for Power Wheelchair Users

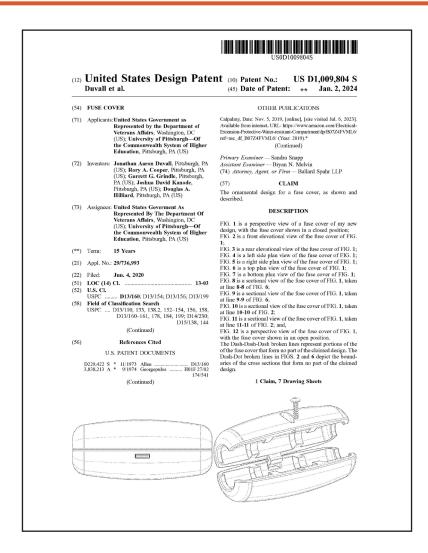
Our study explored control authority preferences among future ARM users. Through a mixedmethods investigation of user perspectives, we provide valuable insights for the design of future collaborative ARM systems that prioritize user autonomy and control.

Breelyn Kane Styler, Wei Deng, Reid Simmons, Henny Admoni, Rory Cooper and Dan Ding (2024). Exploring Control Authority Preferences in Robotic Arm Assistance for Power Wheelchair Users. *Actuators*.





### Publications Patents



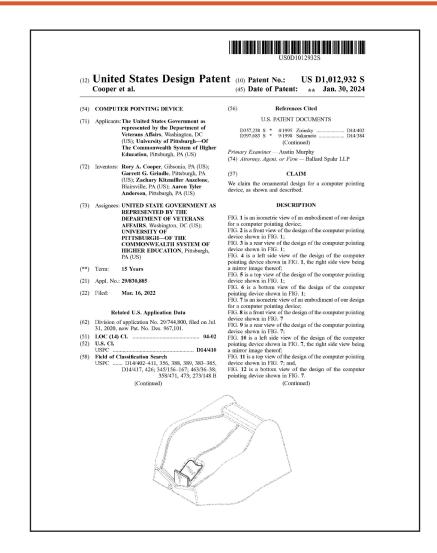
## **Fuse Cover** US D1,009,804 S

1/2/2024

The thermal fuse cover is a cover that clamps the thermal fuse on an oxygen line to the hose to prevent accidental removal and avert blowback in case of a fire. Breathable oxygen systems have a thermal fuse placed in the lines under the cannula to prevent a potential fire in the system from blowing flames into the patient's nose and/or mouth and causing severe internal burns. However, VA patients who use oxygen for respiration assistance frequently and mistakenly disconnect the lines at the thermal fuse when switching oxygen systems (portable to home-based, and vice versa) and leave the fuse out of the lines. This device is a clamp, which makes removing the fuse more difficult by clamping it to the lines and requiring tools to disconnect it.

6

Jonathan Aaron Duvall; Rory A. Cooper; Garrett G. Grindle; Joshua David Kanode; Douglas A. Hilliard.



#### **Computer Pointing Device**

US D1,012,932 S

1/30/2024

This patent is a pointing device for computer mice to be used by people with prosthetic hands. HERL focuses on innovative technologies that improve human mobility.

"The ability to use a computer is critical in today's world, and using a mouse is ubiquitous unless you use a prosthetic arm. This technology opens an efficient, and cost-effective means for individuals who use prosthetic arms to access a computer, which could be revolutionary." -Dr. Rory Cooper

Rory A. Cooper; Garrett G. Grindle; Zachary Kitzmiller Anzelone; Aaron Tyler Anderson.

## Presentations Accepted



#### In Clinic Evaluation of the Transkinect for Automatic **Assessment of Independent Wheelchair Transfer Technique**

Alicia M. Koontz, Ph.D

#### **EUROPEAN SEATING SYMPOSIUM**

The TransKinect, a software application that uses a Microsoft Azure markerless depth sensing camera and machine learning models, was found to have acceptable usability and to support therapists in evaluating and educating their patients to determine proper from improper independent transfer technique.



Sivashankar Sivakanthan, PhD

#### **EUROPEAN SEATING SYMPOSIUM**

The current landscape of electric-powered wheelchairs, especially for people with disabilities, presents significant risks due to inadequate stability in navigating challenging environments like damaged sidewalks and absent curb cuts. Addressing these challenges requires a pivot towards advanced technological aims to bridge the gap in current research, which lacks a guided framework, and to propose innovative solutions that enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities.

#### **Forging Effective Collaborations Between** Clinicians and Researchers to Aid in the **Transition of New Technology**

Alicia M. Koontz. Ph.D.

#### **PVA SUMMIT**

When developing new technologies to assist clinicians in their workflow and/or to support improved patient outcomes, it is critical that they are engaged in every step of the research and development process. Involving clinicians as partners in the research will maximize the potential for effective device translation and acceptance.

## Rumination of the quarter





solutions, primarily focusing on robotic wheelchairs. This workshop





























## **Accolades & Highlights**

Celebrating our best moments and achievements from the past three months.

irector **Dr. Rory Cooper** received a *Distinguished Alumni Award* from UC Santa Barabara, was elected to the *National Academy of Engineers*, was recognized by the University of Pittsburgh Athletics Program along with **Rosi Cooper**, was awarded a U.S. Patent for a *Computer Pointing Device* along with **Dr. Garrett G. Grindle**, **Zack Anzelone**, **Aaron Anderson**, and was named one of STAT's *Top 50 Influencers in the Fields of Health and Life Sciences*.

**Dr. Adam Sterczala** was awarded CCDF funds to build upon the analyses of his CDA, *Irisin/FNDC5* in individuals with spinal cord injury and its association with bone health.

**Dr. Ahlad Neti** successfully defended his PhD dissertation on An In-Depth Analysis on the Implementation of In-wheel Suspension in Manual Wheelchair Users.

**Dr. Jonathan Duvall, Dr. Rory Cooper, Dr. Garret G. Grindle, Joshua Kanode,** and **Douglas Hilliard** were awarded a U.S. Patent for a *Fuse Cover*.

Research Engineer **Jessica Steinberg** and **Danielle Scott** received the second place award of \$30,000 in the Pitt SHRS Innovation Challenge for their work on the *Kirigami Chair*.

On this year's **Pitt Day of Giving**, we raised more than \$4,000 to support the vital research and engineering that we do.

The Human Engineering Research Laboratories' first quarter of 2024 included notable visits from: Pennsylvania State Representative **Rob Mercuri**, **Dr. Urs Schneider** for his lecture on *Bio-Intelligence*, and How Human-Machine Interfaces Can Improve, the **National Defense University's Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy**, **412 AbilityTech** for their third annual *412 AbilityTech Ecosystem Event*, Marine and author **Anthony Swofford**, students from the **Central Catholic Engineering Institute**, and **VA Leadership**.

Our faculty and staff gave a multiple of lectures around the globe!

HERL's Medical Director **Brad Dicianno, MD** discussed Assistive Technology for Pressure Injury Prevention at UPMC's Department of Plastic Surgery. He also presented work on Pneumatic Technology for Powered Mobility Devices at the Association of Academic Physiatrists' February meeting in Orlando, along with **Jeffrey Petigrow**.

**Dr. Cooper** spoke at the UK Parliament's House of Lords in February, and at the Emerging Researchers Network conference sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in March.

#### PHOTO GALLERY (LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM):

VA Leadership receives a MEBot demonstration by Dr. Jorge Candiotti (right) with Iyan Nekib on the chair (3/21).¹ Left to right: Iyan, Keshav Mukherjee, and Shantanu Satpute check work on the MEBot (3/6).² HERL's Jessica Steinberg and Danielle Scott place 2nd in SHRS Innovation Challenge (3/21).³ The HERL team at our seasonal potluck (2/23).⁴ A lunch held during Anthony Swofford's visit(2/20).⁵ Iyan demoing the PTTS (2/20).⁶ Jorge Candiotti presents to NDU (2/1).ⁿ Dr. Cooper presents to NDU (2/1).ⁿ Dr. Cooper and Dr. Keagle (2/1).ⁿ Josh Marino and Dr. Keagle (2/1).ⁿ HERL group photo with NDU students (2/1).ⁿ Rosi Cooper giving a tour to Carlow Univeristy OT students (2/14).¹² Dr. Cooper and Rosi Cooper pose with HERL team after receiving a live recognition by Pitt Athletics (1/12).¹³ Dr. Urs Scneider and HERL after his lecture (1/30).¹⁴

### In the News

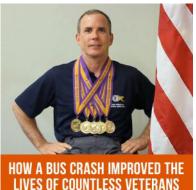


#### Let's Talk Social Innovation

Self Respect, Paralympics, and A Better Future for the Disabled

#### January

Dr. Cooper sits down with Ian Kehinde to talk about his upbringing, his time serving in the US military, his work at the Human Engineering Research Laboratories, and what everyday life is like for a disabled person.

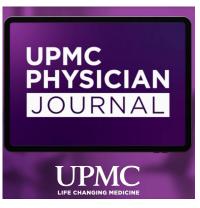


#### **AUSA's Army Matters Podcast**

How a Bus Crash Improved the Lives of Countless Veterans

#### January

Host SMA (Ret.) Dan Dailey and guest co-host LaSherryn Duncan sit down with Dr. Cooper to discuss the impact of his Army experience, the numerous inventions he and his teams have overseen, his receipt of the National Medal of Technology and Innovation award – and what it's like to be one of only a handful of inventors to have ever been immortalized with a collectible trading card AND appear on a Cheerios box...



## **UPMC Physician Resources**Advances in Wheelchair Designs

#### January

Go inside the Human Research Engineering Laboratories (HERL) at the University of Pittsburgh as renowned engineer, author, and athlete Dr. Rory Cooper explains cutting-edge advances in wheelchair design.



#### **Pittwire**

Rory Cooper was elected to the National Academy of Engineering

#### February

Rory Cooper, a distinguished professor in Pitt's School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and founding director of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories, was among 114 new U.S. members elected to the National Academy of Engineering Class of 2024.

## Paraplegia News Rising Inclusion

#### February

Jr. Editor in Chief of PN writes about Bridging the Gap, the documentary film chronicling Dr. Cooper's life with his wife, Rosemary, as well as his impressive journey from an Army sergeant paralyzed in an accident in Germany, to becoming the founder and director of HERL.



#### Federal News Network

VA Researcher Devoted His Career to Technology for Assisting the Disabled

February

The Federal Drive with Tom Temin spoke with Rory Cooper, VA senior research career scientist, Paralympian, and the man who directs the Human engineering Research Laboratories, a joint VA and University of Pittsburgh effort.



#### **STAT News** STATUS List 2024

February

Rory A. Cooper, PhD, PLY (University of Pittsburgh) has dedicated his career to advancing wheelchair technology and improving the mobility of people with disabilities. Meet one of the selections to the 2024 #STATUSList.



# Rectuiting participants

Scan here to sign up to our **Assistive Technology Registry.** 



Scan here to learn more about the Accessible Airline Transportation for Mobility Device Users: Survey.



Scan here to learn more about the **Socially Connected Exercise System for Wheelchair Users**.



## Sign up to our Registry!

A research registry is a collection of individuals interested in learning about research studies that may be of interest to them. We are inviting you to join in the Human Engineering Research Laboratories (HERL) Assistive Technology Registry because you might be interested in participating in our current or future research studies.

# Accessible Airline Transportation for Mobility Device Users: Survey

Principal Investigator: Rory Cooper, PhD

**Purpose:** To estimate pent-up demand among mobility device (MD) users to travel on commercial airlines and identify MD users' needs and pain points.

**Study Requirements:** Complete a survey about your demographics and airline travel experiences. The survey is expected to take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

# Socially Connected Exercise System for Wheelchair Users

Principal Investigator: Alicia Koontz, PhD

**Purpose:** To identify the design needs and wants for an at-home, social-connected fitness machine for use by persons with disabilities.

**Study Requirements:** Join a group of others with disabilities to answer questions about their experiences using commercial fitness machines, fitness tracking apps and social-connected fitness apps with a group of other individuals with disabilities.

14

Scan here to learn more about **Bone Health in Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury**.



Scan here to learn more about the **Powered Personal Transfer System**.



Scan here to learn more about Knee Stress-Relief Powered Exoskeleton.



## Bone Health in Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury

Principal Investigator: Adam Sterczala, PhD

**Purpose:** To learn about the connection between irisin (muscle-secreted bone mediating protein) and bone health in individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI). This study will also explore whether exercise can increase irisin concentrations in circulation.

**Study Requirements:** For more information or to check eligibility, call 412-822-3685 and mention the Irisin SCI Study.

## Development and Evaluation of Powered Personal Transfer System (PPTS) for Wheelchair Users (Phase II)

Principal Investigator: Rory Cooper, PhD

**Purpose:** To collect feedback from caregivers and power wheelchair users on the PPTS transfer process and the new custom seating system.

**Study Requirements:** Caregivers will experience being transferred using the PPTS before testing how to transfer with the new system. Power wheelchair users will be transferred using the PPTS before navigating through a mobility course in a test wheelchair, than 20 minutes to complete.

### Design Improvements and Evaluation of a Knee Stress-Relief Powered Exoskeleton for Veterans with Knee Osteoarthritis

Principal Investigator: Dan Ding, PhD

**Purpose:** To compare the study's performance to a passive knee brace in people with osteoarthritis (OA).

**Study Requirements:** Participants will answer questions and perform tasks during two visits.

## **Upcoming Events**

Here are some important save-the-dates for events HERL will be hosting or participating in.

April 1-7: National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Games

April 19-21: Buckeye Games

May 14: Distinguished Lecture @ HERL

May 21: Bumps in the Road, University of Pittsburgh showing

May 28: Mini-Symposium @ HERL

July 23: HERL's 30th Anniversary

July 24: Open House



## **Our Affiliations**

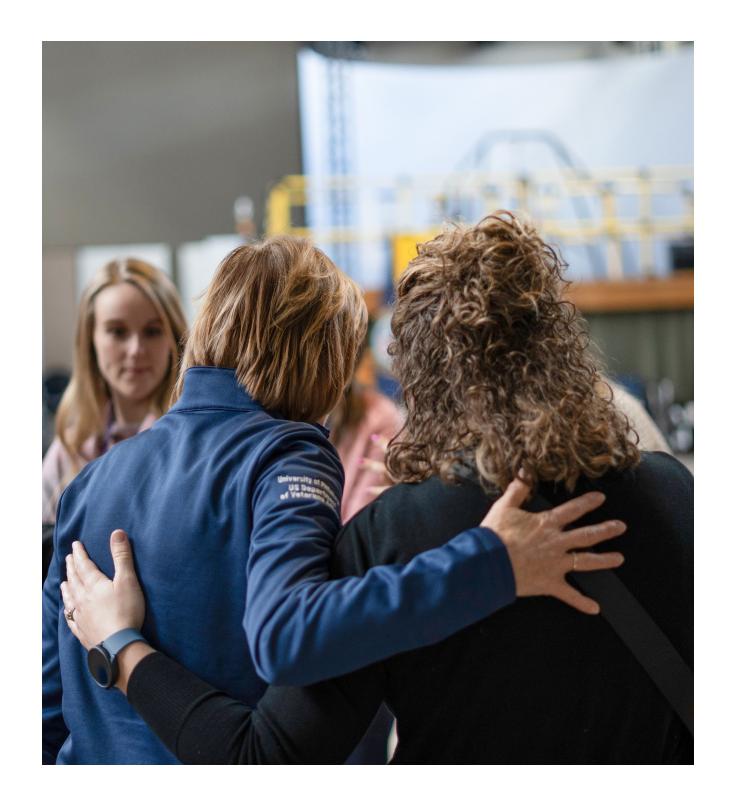












## **THANK YOU FOR READING!**

19

Stay tuned for our next newsletter in July.

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SCAN THIS QR CODE TO SEE ALL OUR RELEVANT LINKS, INCLUDING OUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS!



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