

**Bloorview Research institute Annual Symposium
November 2011**

Podium Presentation: Barbara Gibson

Title:

Rethinking Independence and Dependence: The Interconnectedness of Persons and Assistive Technologies

Abstract:

In this presentation I explore independence and dependence through a discussion of the interconnectedness of persons with disabilities, their carers and assistive technologies. Drawing on postmodern theories, I discuss the interconnections inherent in disability experiences through the case example of Mimi, an adolescent girl with severe physical impairments. I consider how Mimi, her assistive technologies and her parents can be viewed as assemblages of bodies/technologies/subjectivities that together achieve a set of practices. An examination of these assemblages suggests different understandings of disability that re-imagine dependency as connectivity. Connectivity can be embraced to explore multiple ways of being-in-the-world for all persons and problematizes the goals of independence inherent in rehabilitation practices. I conclude with examples of applications to adult and children's rehabilitation.

Bio: Dr Barbara Gibson is a physical therapist and bioethicist whose research examines the social and ethical dimensions of disability and rehabilitation. Barbara is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at the University of Toronto and a Scientist at the Bloorview Research Institute. She holds a Canadian Child Health Clinician Scientist Career Development Award. Barbara's research integrates theories and methods from bioethics, social sciences and health sciences to investigate the effects of healthcare on quality of life, community participation and social inclusion of youth with disabilities. Her work has examined key areas of health practices and policies including transitioning to adulthood, independent living, optimizing activity participation, and understanding relationships between mobility, identity, and social inclusion.