Assessment tools for evaluating body structure-function and activity in dyskinetic cerebral palsy: a systematic review of instrumented assessments according to ICF-CY

[E](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4127-8426)da Burç, [C](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5692-3814)emil Özal, [M](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4942-5272)intaze Kerem Günel

Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation, Faculty of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkiye

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ABSTRACT

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Dyskinetic cerebral palsy (CP) is one of the most severe forms of CP, characterized by dystonia or choreoathetosis and can be classified into dystonic and choreoathetosis subgroups. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health-Child and Youth Version (ICF-CY) provides a framework for physical therapists to understand the health, functioning, activity, participation, and impact of dystonia and choreoathetosis. This review aimed to examine the clinical use of ICF-CY tools to assess body structure, function, and activity in children with dyskinetic CP. A systematic search was conducted in June 2024 using PubMed, Embase, Scopus, and Google Scholar databases. The search included terms related to cerebral palsy, dyskinesia, choreoathetosis, dystonia, body structure, function, and activity. After removing duplicates, 11,800 articles remained and 34 met the inclusion criteria. The review found that ICF-CY activity assessments focused primarily on fine-motor, communication, eating-drinking, bimanual fine motor, and speech functions following gross motor function. Some studies have evaluated ICF-CY body structure and function. Most studies used the Dyskinesia Impairment Scale. This review presents evaluations using instrumented assessments as objective outcome measures in patients with dyskinetic CP. Future studies should develop measurements that are applicable outside the laboratory by using new technologies.

Keywords: Dyskinetic cerebral palsy, assessment tools, ICF-CY, body structure and function, activity

INTRODUCTION

Dyskinetic cerebral palsy (CP) is one of the most severe forms of CP.1 It is a motor disorder characterized by changes in muscle tone and posture, with a variable element of involuntary movement.2,3 Dyskinetic CP is based on the predominance of dystonia or choreoathetosis; thus, it can be further classified into the dystonic and choreoathetosis subgroups. Dystonia and choreoathetosis often coexist in dyskinetic CP, and the term dyskinetic CP is used when the predominance of dystonia and choreoathetosis is difficult to define.²⁻⁶

In dystonic CP, involuntary movements and sustained/ intermittent muscle contractions occur, causing abnormal twisted posture and repetitive movements in abnormal posture.5 Dyskinetic CP is the most common definition of dystonia in children, which occurs as a result of hypoxicischemic damage to the basal ganglia, thalamus, brain stem, and cerebellum during the prenatal, perinatal, or infancy periods.⁵

In choreoathetoid CP, hyperkinesia and hypotonia cooccur and fluctuations in muscle tone are dominant.^{5,7} Choreoathetoid movements are defined as rapid, involuntary, jumpy, and small-amplitude movements that usually involve the distal extremities. Athetosis is an involuntary, discrete, slow, ever-changing, complex, writhing, irregular movement. It is prominent on the distal extremities and face.^{5,7} Choreoathetosis appears to be associated with pure thalamic and basal ganglia lesions.4

Currently, several scales are used to define the severity of dystonia in dyskinetic CP, such as the Barry-Albright Dystonia Scale (BADS), Dyskinesia Impairment Scale (DIS), Burke-Fahn-Marsden Dystonia Rating Scale Movement (BFM-M), hypertonia assessment tool (HAT), and Unified Dystonia Rating Scale (UDRS).⁷⁻¹³ The DIS also assesses choreoathetosis and dystonia.⁷ Clinical scales are often used in conjunction with questionnaires such as The pediatric evaluation of disability inventory (PEDI), Caregiver Priorities and Child Health Index of Life with Disabilities (CPCHILD), and quality of upper extremity skills test (QUEST), which determine performance-based outcome measures.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ In addition, individualized outcome measures such as the Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) and the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) are used to evaluate treatment outcomes in patients with dyskinetic CP.17-23

Corresponding Author: Eda Burç, eda_burc_1994@hotmail.com

Functional classification systems play an important role in the management of children and youth with CP and in distinguishing the characteristics of functional abilities, and can assist in setting goals and planning management. The most commonly used classification systems for CP are the gross motor function classification system (GMFCS), manual ability classification system (MACS), communication function classification system (CFCS), eating and drinking ability classification system (EDACS), Viking Speech Scale (VSS), and visual function classification system (VFCS).²⁴⁻³¹ Although dyskinetic CP is the second largest group of CP in the entire CP population, only a few studies have investigated the functional classification of dyskinetic CP. In addition, it is important to establish a comprehensive functional profile to develop targeted interventions for dyskinetic CP.

With increasing attention paid to limitations in function, activity, and participation in neurodevelopmental disability, function-based classification schemes have recently emerged.³² The gross motor function classification system (GMFCS) addresses gross motor functional capacity and classifies children along a specific functional trait, particularly as it relates to the core functions of individual ambulation.²⁴ It is psychometrically appropriate in terms of reliability and validity, enables the identification of a child's skills and needs, and allows for clear and concise communication between healthcare professionals.33 Unlike the traditional subtype classification scheme, it provides information about the correct prognosis and the need for eventual ambulation status when applied early in life.³⁴ The number of publications citing the GMFCS is increasing every year, and this classification system has become internationally accepted in research and clinical use for clear communication among health professionals about gross motor functioning in children.³⁵

The International classification of functioning, disability, and health (ICF) is a classification system created by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2001 to establish a standard language and common framework for describing health and health-related conditions.36 After this classification system was

established for adults by the WHO in 2001, the International classification of functioning, disability and health-child and youth version (ICF-CY), which deals with children and young people and considers growth and development, was published in 2007.37 The ICF-CY provides a useful framework for physical therapists to better understand health, functioning, activity, participation, contextual factors, and the impact of dystonia and choreoathetosis. ICF contributes to a comprehensive understanding of dyskinetic CP and allows therapists to manage it effectively.32 Moreover, evaluating the body functions, structures, and activity levels of children and adolescents with dystonia and choreoathetosis within the framework of the ICF-CY may provide more effective clinical management of dyskinetic CP.7

Currently, there is no consensus on most applicable, reliable, and valid tools used for the evaluation of choreoathetosis and dystonia in children with dyskinetic CP.38 This systematic review aimed to describe and critically examine the rate of clinical use of tools reported to assess body structure function and activity under ICF-CY for clinical types of dystonia and choreoathetosis in children and adolescents with CP. Additionally, we aim to provide an overview of the parameters that can be derived from these measurement tools.

METHODS

Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted in June 2024 using four electronic databases: PubMed, Embase, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The search strategy included the following blocks.

Diagnosis: terms related to cerebral palsy,

Movement disorder: Terms such as dyskinesia, choreoathetosis, and dystonia,

Body structure, function, and activity: Terms related to body structure function and activity.

The detailed search strategy for each database is provided in Supplementary **Table 1**.

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria were established using the PICOS framework.

Participants: Studies involving individuals diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

Intervention: Studies examining movement disorders (e.g., dyskinesia, choreoathetosis, dystonia).

Comparison: Studies that included a control group or comparative intervention.

Outcome: Studies reporting body structure function and activity outcomes.

Study design: Randomized controlled trials, cohort studies, case-control studies, and cross-sectional studies.

Selection Process

The search results were imported into EndNote for reference. Duplicate records were removed prior to screening. The initial screening of the titles and abstracts was performed by a single reviewer (EB). The full texts of potentially eligible studies were retrieved and assessed in detail against the inclusion criteria by the same reviewer (EB).

Data Extraction

Data extraction was performed using a standardized form. The extracted data included the following.

- Study characteristics (author, year, country),
- Participant characteristics (sample size, age, gender, diagnosis),
- Intervention details,
- Outcomes measured,
- Main findings.

Quality Assessment

The quality of the included studies was assessed using the Cochrane Risk of Bias tool for randomized controlled trials and Newcastle-Ottawa Scale for observational studies. Risk of bias assessment was independently conducted by two reviewers (EB and MG). Discrepancies were resolved through discussion or by consulting with a third reviewer (CO).

Data Synthesis

Narrative synthesis of the findings was conducted because of the heterogeneity of the included studies. Where possible, a meta-analysis was performed using a random-effects model to account for the variability among studies. Statistical heterogeneity was assessed using the I² statistic.

Resolution of Disagreements

Any disagreements encountered during article selection, data extraction, or quality assessment processes were resolved by discussion between the primary reviewer (EB) and the second (MG) and third reviewers (CO).

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria created using the preferred reporting ıtems for systematic reviews and

meta-analyses (PRISMA). After removing duplicate articles from the search results, 11,800 records remained. Forty-six articles meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria were reviewed for further eligibility assessment, and the full texts were obtained.

In 34 of 46 articles, body structure function and activity evaluation of clinical types of dystonia and choreoathetosis in children and adolescents with CP, children, and young people with dyskinetic CP were included as the main participant group or as a separate subgroup, and the results have been reported accordingly. The descriptions of the included articles are shown in **Table 2**.

Function and Disability

Body functions and structures: Body structure function was evaluated in 32.3% of the 34 studies. The Dyskinesia Impairment Scale (DIS) was used in 14.71% of these studies; Barry-Albright Dystonia Scale (BADS) in 11.7%; Burke-Fahn-Marsden Dystonia Rating Scale-Movement (BFM-M) in 15.4%; as intellectual and executive function evaluation criteria, Raven's colored progressive matrices were used in 15.4%, the stop signal task in 15.4%, the Wisconsin card sorting test in 15.4%, the stockings of Cambridge test in 15.4%, magnetic resonance (MR) imaging in 20.5%, pattern/ verbal recognition memory task in 7.6%, Benton's facial recognition test in 7.6%, Benton's judgment of line orientation test in 7.9%, The peabody picture vocabulary test in 7.6%, the computer-based instrument for low motor language testing (C-BilLLT) in 5.8%, IQ testing in 5.8%, Movement Disorder-Childhood Rating Scale (MD-CRS 4-18) in 2.9%, The neonatal neuroimaging classification system (NNICS) in 2.9%, spasticity test (SPAT) in 2.9%, Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) in 2.9%, pediatric evaluation of disability inventory (PEDI) in 2.9%. $4,21,39-54$ Lexical Verbal Fluency tests in 15.4% Pena-Casanova et al.⁵⁵

Activity

Activity was evaluated in 34 studies. The following classification systems were used in these articles: GMFCS, 94.1%; MACS, 70.5%, CFCS 32.3%; EDACS, 11.7%; bimanual fine motor function (BFMF) classification, 11.7%; and VSS, 8.8%. The gross motor function measure (GMFM) was used in 5.8% of patients.4,21,39-43,45,47-65

Gross Motor Function Classification System (GMFCS)

In the following studies, 27.9%-100% of the participants were classified as GMFCS V: Sun et al.⁵⁶ and Préel et al.⁶⁸ and Westbom et al.,⁶⁹ and Elze et al.⁴⁵ and Bonouvrié et al.,⁵¹ Williams and Pountney,⁶⁶ Zouvelou et al.,⁶⁷ Bekteshi et al.⁶¹ Vanmechelen et al.³⁹ and Monbaliu et al.⁴ and Knights et al.,¹¹ and Eek et al.,²¹ Carnahan et al.,⁶³ Monbaliu et al.,⁴¹ Bonouvrie et al.,⁴² Battini⁵⁴ and Unes et al.⁵³

Of the participants, 42.8%-61% had GMFCS IV in the following studies: Shevell et al.,⁷⁰ Park et al.,⁴⁴ Andersen et al.⁶⁵ and Soleimani et al.60

In Gimeno et al.,⁴⁶ 85.7% of the participants had GMFCS IV or V (equal numbers of patients for each).

Cerebral Palsy Functional Impact Scale, MACS: Manual ability classification system, GMFCS: Gross motor function, SPG: Spastic paraplegia genes, VSS: Viking Speech Scale, BADS: Barry-Albright Dystonia Scale, FMS: Functional Mobility Scale, JTT: Jebsen-Taylor hand function test, ABIL-K: ABILHAND-kids questionnaire, LIFE-H: LifeHabits kids, SEM: Standard error measurement

In the following studies, 35.9%-80% of the prticipants were GMFCS I: Ballester-Plané et al.⁵⁷ and Ballester-Plané et al.⁵⁸ and Laporta-Hoyos et al.,⁴⁷ and Laporta-Hoyos et al.,⁴⁸ Bonouvrie.42

Manual Ability Classification System (MACS)

In the following studies, 23.5%-84% of participants had MACS V: Elze et al.,⁴⁵ Bekteshi et al.,⁶¹ Vanmechelen et al.,³⁹ Bonouvrié⁵¹ and Monbaliu et al.,⁴ Monbaliu et al.,⁴⁰ Butler et al.,⁶² Eek et al.²¹ Carnahan et al.,⁶³ Eliasson et al.,²⁶ and Monbaliu et al.,⁴¹ Bonouvrie,⁴² Stewart et al.⁴³ and Unes et al.⁵³

Soleimani et al. 60 and Gimeno et al., 46 35.7% and 92.8% of the participants were MACS IV or MACS V, respectively, and they were equal in each study.

In subsequent studies, 17-33.3% of the participants were MACS III, and Laporta-Hoyos et al., 47 Laporta-Hoyos et al., 55 Laporta-Hoyos et al.,⁴⁸ Dhondt et al.,⁵² Stewart et al.⁴³ and Unes et al.⁵³

Sun et al.⁵⁶ and Ballester-Plané et al.,⁵⁸ and 31.1% and 32% of the participants were MACS II.

Communication Function Classification System (CFCS)

Elze et al.⁴⁵ found that 13.6% of the participants had CFCS IV.

In Vanmechelen et al.,³⁹ 38.4% of the participants were classified as CFCS III.

In these studies, 36.3%-44.2% of the participants had CFCS II. Sun et al.⁵⁶ Laporta-Hoyos et al.,⁴⁷ and Laporta-Hoyos et al.,⁵⁹ Monbaliu et al.⁴ and Monbaliu et al.⁴⁰

A study by Laporta-Hoyos et al.,⁴⁸ Stewart et al.⁴³ and Unes et al.,53 28% -44% of the participants were CFCS I.

Bimanual Fine Motor Function (BFMF) Classification

In Andersen et al.⁶⁵ and Eek et al.,²¹ 72% and 74% of the participants had BMFM V, respectively.

In Ballester-Plané et al.,⁵⁷ Dhondt et al.,⁵² 15.2% and 30.7% of participants had BMFM III.

Eating and Drinking Ability Classification System (EDACS)

Vanmechelen et al.,³⁹ Monbaliu et al.,⁴⁰ Stewart et al.,⁴³ 33% and 36.5% of the participants were EDACS II, respectively.

Viking Speech Scale (VSS)

In Vanmechelen et al.,³⁹ Monbaliu et al.⁴⁰ and Dhondt et al.,⁵² 29.5% and 43.6% of the participants had CFCS IV, respectively.

Gross Motor Function Measure (GMFM)

Williams and Pountney,⁶⁶ Andersen et al.,⁶⁵ and Monbaliu et al.40 used GMFM as an activity measure in their studies.

DISCUSSION

Our study provides an overview of instrumented measures used to assess body structure function and activity as part of ICF-CY in children and youth with CP and with clinical types of dystonia and choreoathetosis. The current study can guide researchers and clinicians in making informed decisions regarding evaluations for specific purposes in dyskinetic CP. In dyskinetic CP, there are a number of instrumented classification systems for assessing activity directly. Most body function assessment tools assess involuntary movements that are not directly related to the desired task, expressed as an excessive flow of muscle activation.

Body Structure and Function

This systematic review identified scales reported to measure dystonia and choreoathetosis in children with CP. All of these scales assess dystonia, but only the DIS assesses choreoathetosis in addition to dystonia. Two scales, the BADS and DIS, were designed primarily to measure secondary dystonia in people with CP. Other scales have been designed to assess primary dystonia or more than one type of movement disorder. Three articles evaluated dystonia and choreoathetosis at rest and during activities.^{39,40,66} These assessments were performed using the DIS. This scale allows researchers to identify explosive movements found in dystonia and choreoathetosis and to map them in the body according to clinical patterns. In these articles, explosive movements of dystonia and choreoathetosis were evaluated simultaneously using this scale. Considering the reviewed articles, this scale has broadened our perspective on the structural and functional profiles of individuals with dyskinetic CP. Considering the reviewed articles, the DIS scale has expanded our perspective on the structural and functional profiles of individuals with dyskinetic CP. The DIS enables body structure and function assessment of dystonia and choreoathetosis in dyskinetic CP, together with functional classification systems that assess gross motor skills, upper extremity function, eating and drinking ability, communication, and speech.

In the articles included in our review, the clinical benefits of MRI imaging used in body structure-function assessment in children with dyskinetic CP have been shown to establish reasonable relationships between lesions in regions of the brain other than those that cause dyskinetic CP in general and add more value to clinical feedback.^{45,46} However, a large proportion of individuals with dyskinetic CP have severe intellectual disabilities.62,67 Tests assessing intellectual and executive function in the studies were carefully selected to allow most participants to respond autonomously. In the studies, the results of these tests were transferred to a computer environment and the use of assistive technology for communication was allowed. Participants were encouraged to use an assessment scale appropriate for their degree of disability and the communication devices that they normally use.

The impact of treatment options on different types and severity of dyskinetic CP also needs to be fully investigated. Therefore, the determination of dyskinetic CP and the dominant subclinical type requires clear evaluation and reporting criteria. One of the purposes of this review is to bridge this gap and identify and critically examine tools that assess body structure and function.

Activity

Most of the methods reviewed in the present study had this in common: they assess manual dexterity and/or ambulation activity during tasks that require some level of understanding

of the task instructions. The methods reviewed here provide the full functional profile of individuals with dyskinetic CP, including areas of speech, eating, and drinking, using current classification systems in addition to gross motor, dexterity, and communication classification. In most of the reviewed articles, individuals with dyskinetic CP had severe deficiencies in gross motor function, manual dexterity, and speech production. Therefore, a large number of children and adolescents with dyskinetic CP have been evaluated using only a few instrumentation methods.

The literature clearly demonstrates a high correlation between all CP subtypes that occur with significant frequency and the level of GMFCS (the low number of children with the ataxichypotonic variant precludes definitive analyses and statements regarding this subtype).68 The GMFCS is a particularly valid method for assessing gross motor function, which ultimately reflects the ability to act independently. It is quite unusual and rare for a child with spastic diplegia or hemiplegia to be unable to ambulate independently. Ambulation is an important question asked by parents when their children are first diagnosed. Independent walking, however, is an important determinant of participation, leading to improved individual quality of life.69,70 Independent ambulation occurs only in a small group of children with spastic quadriplegia or dyskinesia. Therefore, when the neurologic subtype is known, a strong prediction of ambulation-related functional status can be made, emphasizing that the GMFCS is a strong predictor. Conversely, the determined functional status can provide information about which neurological subtypes may occur.

Intervention outcomes for children with dystonia and other hyperkinetic movement disorders are often defined using a disorder-based dystonia rating scale such as the Burke– Fahn–Marsden Dystonia Rating Scale-Movement (BFM-M). However, without additional data, scores on such scales allow only limited inferences about an individual's functional status.45 The use of functional classification scales such as the GMFCS, MACS, and CFCS provides a common language for describing motor affect severity and functional status of both patients and research participants. These scales require no formal clinician training, are fast, cost-effective, and easy to administer. They help contextualize BFM-M scores and facilitate the interpretation of research results by providing a clearer understanding of the functional abilities of the study participants. These classification systems, which reflect performance in daily life by focusing on function, provide meaningful information beyond etiology and disorder, as recommended by the ICF.45

Finer abilities in eating and drinking functions are a rare finding compared to gross motor and upper extremity functions, and this is consistent with the results of communication assessments in studies on dyskinetic CP.4 However, speech production was not evaluated using the evaluation criteria of the EDACS and CFCS. This can be explained by one of the components evaluated at these scales. Communication function and eating and drinking abilities are supported by changes in the motor development processes. The focus of the EDACS and CFCS is to define an individual's ability to eat and drink safely and perform their daily communication

function regardless of the communication method used. Speech production, respiratory control, phonation, and articulation were assessed using the VSS. The VSS, together with scales evaluating communication skills and eating and drinking abilities, provided complementarity to profile oralmotor function and upper/lower motor function in children with dyskinetic CP.

The GMFM, used as a measure of activity in the articles described in this systematic review, has been found to be successful in distinguishing various domains of motor dysfunction in children with CP and with spastic diplegia and athetosis. This criterion provides guidance for the development of children's participation in their functional activities, and therefore, in their activities in individual, family, and social circles.[71] In our literature review, we observed that the GMFM was used as an activity evaluation criterion for individuals with dyskinetic CP.

Body structure function and activity evaluations were performed at the ICF-CY level in the articles reviewed in this review. However, none of the articles evaluated the body structure function and activity in the daily environment of the participants. Therefore, it is controversial whether the results can be generalized to real-life situations. Many children and young people with dyskinetic CP depend on wheelchairs (manual or electric) in daily life. Therefore, it may be useful to evaluate the quality and duration of wheelchair use using instrumented methods in daily life. Evaluating wheelchair performance (or the performance of different controllers for motorized wheelchair mobility) in a virtual environment, as recently reported, is a very interesting option for this group.⁷²

In recent years, wearable sensor technologies have been increasingly used to detect certain movements, such as neurological disorders, epilepsy, and stereotypical movement patterns including CP.73-75 However, no study has specifically investigated dyskinetic CP. Wearable sensors allow the monitoring of dyskinetic movements in daily life outside the laboratory environment. Considering the severity of the disorder, movements may change over time and may be exacerbated by external stimuli such as stress, pain, and noise.66 For this reason, an evaluation that can be performed for a longer period of time in the daily environment may provide more reliable evaluation results in children and adolescents with dyskinetic CP.⁷⁶⁻⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

This review presents the instrumented measures used as objective outcome measures in patients with dyskinetic CP. Future studies should aim to develop instrumented measurements that can be applied outside the laboratory with new technological developments. This is especially important for severely disabled young adults and children with dyskinetic CP.

ETHICAL DECLARATIONS

Referee Evaluation Process Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Author Contributions

All of the authors declare that they have all participated in the design, execution, and analysis of the paper, and that they have approved the final version.

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