

Introductory Remarks by Katherine D. Seelman, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology, Associate Dean Disability Programs, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Pittsburgh

Thank you, David. Actually my real recommendation to everybody in life is always stay near an engineer. Nothing breaks down. So welcome everybody. As Dave said I'm Kate Seelman. And welcome old friends and new. I see a lot of old friends to the telerehabilitation where rehabilitation and broadband tech intersect. Broadband is very important to us, you know, because it carries a lot more graphic information and the kind of information we need. I think we all agree that people with disabilities, like all people, deserve the benefits of innovation. We haven't often thought about our population having the right to have technology just like everybody else and every day technology like everybody else. For many of us, telerehabilitation is transformative because it provides an opportunity to level the health and employment playing field for people with disabilities. And to do it in a cost effective way. The person who had a severe spinal cord injury is sent back to a community far away from a rehab center of excellence with few resources and supports for social and certainly for vocational. This was the initial thought at NIDRR when it awarded the first rehabilitation engineering research center. We need to be able to reach these people and to help them reintegrate themselves back into society. So our common purpose today as a community of interest in telerehabilitation, consumers, researchers, practitioners, industry and policymakers is to advance education and advocacy and to move telerehabilitation research and practice to its next step. We have a cutting edge group of keynoters with the Commissioner

of RSA starting us off and panelists who are as knowledgeable as the audience. I know most of you and you could be up here too, many of you so the dialogue should lead to some practical outcomes. I'm sure you're not shy about dialogue. I am pleased to introduce the directors of NIDRR's RERC on telerehabilitation, Dave Brienza has already introduced himself. Dr. McCue, Mike McCue and faculty and students from the University of Pittsburgh, will you raise your hands.

You can tell we are a team. Dr. Rimmer here has a good team I'm sure at the University of Chicago, University of Illinois Chicago, and then I also want to introduce one of the best leaders we have in the disability movement, consumer movement and that's Jenifer Simpson at AAPD. She didn't recognize herself but that's very true of her. The NIDRR project officer Margaret Campbell will be along and Connie Pledger, the committee on disability, disability research, and I know many of you in the audience have advanced disability studies in rehabilitation. I wish we had time to introduce all of you but please introduce yourselves and I'll come up and introduce myself too and to each other and when you have questions or comments or of course during lunch and the breaks, so Jenifer, could you want to come up and say a few words.