



Jesse Owens, Ph.D., Alaska WWAMI Associate Professor, Receives Appropriate Technology Design Award for 2007 from RESNA (Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America)



Dr. Jesse Owens, Associate Professor in the University of Alaska Anchorage WWAMI Biomedical Program and the Department of Biological Sciences, received the RESNA Appropriate Technology Design Award for 2007, taking first place in the overall category.

His Skeeter is essentially a low-cost motorbike for wheel chair users. The RESNA Appropriate Technology Design Competition seeks to encourage the creation of inexpensive appropriate technology for people with disabilities living in developing nations or impoverished areas of the world.

Judging criteria included: 1) importance; 2) cost; 3) availability of materials and technology; 4) innovation and creativity; and 5) potential effectiveness.

The Skeeter is constructed from a combination of economical bicycle parts, a custom-built frame, and an inexpensive 49 cc 2-cycle engine. A novel wheelchair lock-down is incorporated, providing rock-solid immobility of the wheelchair and allowing a wide range of wheelchair users to operate the device. A fold-down seat can be incorporated for those who are disabled but do not use a wheelchair, such as amputees.

The Skeeter gives a wheelchair user the independence to travel to work, school, job training or anywhere else without assistance and at about 10 miles per hour. Importantly, the Skeeter can be produced inexpensively for about \$200 and can be repaired in developing or impoverished areas of the world.

Dr. Owens has a long history of innovative, low-cost design for assistive devices. He works on a regular basis with organizations in Cambodia and elsewhere to provide designs that can be manufactured at local sites with readily available materials in order to provide low-cost assistive devices while simultaneously creating jobs.

Dr. Owens is also the Senior Science Advisor for the Spinal Cord Society Australia, where his activities center on stem cell research.