



Response to Attacks on Titanium: Setting the Record Straight

Background

Two wheelchair manufacturers recently announced that they are discontinuing their titanium wheelchair lines. In some cases, these announcements have been accompanied by attacks on the benefits of titanium. The attacks present incomplete sets of facts, they are misleading, and they do a disservice to consumers. It is important to set the record straight.

Bottom Line #1: Choice Matters

In our industry, when manufacturers remove a proven technology from their product line, it reduces choice. When choices are taken away, it's like saying to clinicians and consumers, "I know what's right for you, so I'll choose for you!" The only person who knows what's right for you is you and your clinician.

TiLite will always provide choices to consumers, clinicians, and providers.

Bottom Line #2: Material Matters

At TiLite, material selection is a central pillar of design. Materials matter because materials are *different*. Different frame materials have different properties, different ride characteristics, and they interact differently across varying designs and environments. The wheelchair industry, like the bicycle and aerospace industries, recognizes this fact and has offered a choice of materials to meet individual preferences and needs.

Selection of frame material is a critical choice. At TiLite, that choice is yours.

Setting the Record Straight

You can put lipstick on an attack ad, but it's still an attack ad: The attacks on titanium attempt to convey objectivity through a poised presenter and the use of scientific references. The attempt fails. These are attack ads in which the presenter is not identified and dubious sources are cited. One source is an *unpublished* paper on vibration dampening written by a first year graduate student at the Colorado School of Mines. When contacted to learn more about his research, the student said in an e-mail: "I wrote it for a company as an independent consultant." Put simply, he was paid to do the research by a company invested in the outcome.

To debunk a myth, you have to first make it up: The attacks repeatedly say that chair performance is not just about the materials, it's about the design and engineering. This implies that a myth has been "sold to consumers" that it's only about the materials. Of course it's not only about the materials, but materials are a central pillar of design. We say now what we have always said: Fusing advanced technology, materials, and customization with stunning design makes a great wheelchair.

It's not materials vs. design, it's materials and design: The attacks acknowledge that titanium has a higher strength-to-weight ratio, but then argue that there are ways to shape aluminum to strengthen it. There are also ways to shape titanium to strengthen it. In fact, TiLite used shaped titanium on the first chair it ever produced and has been doing so consistently ever since. This is because materials and design interact. Yet, despite this interaction, the attacks still refer to "materials vs. design," as if you have to choose one. This is a false choice. Materials *and* design are both important. Renowned researcher and professor, Dr. Rory Cooper, recognized this as well when he listed the "expanded use of titanium" as #2 in his "Top 10 Advances" in manual wheelchairs over the past decade.

TiLite's Commitment

TiLite has a singular focus and singular goal: Make the best manual wheelchairs in the world. No compromises. No short-cuts. In pursuit of that goal, we recognize that there is nothing more important than creating choices for you. That is why we make, and will continue to make, the best chairs on the market in titanium and aluminum.