

The Journey Of Recovery

Stroke Rehabilitation

By: Derek Spinney, PT, CSCS Director of Rehabilitation Services Eisenhower Medical Center



The Activities of Daily Living Lab in the Physical Therapy Department at Eisenhower Medical center enables therapists to address patients need with household tasks in a home environment. Above, therapist Bob Candari helps Grace Hochwarth with kitchen activities.

The journey of recovery from a stroke begins immediately, and Eisenhower Medical Center's Rehabilitation Services has a team of experts to assist stroke patients every step of the way. Physical Therapists concentrate on the recovery of gross motor skills — bed mobility, transfers to and from chairs, balance, and gait. Occupational Therapists work on fine motor skills, activities of daily living, and adaptations to the environment. Speech Therapists assist in the recovery of speech and communication skills, swallowing function, and cognition (sequencing and memory abilities).

In the intensive care unit, therapists assess each patient for cognition, ability to follow commands, strength, ability to swallow, and movement. The therapists work with the patient, with assistance from the family and nurses, to maintain joint motion. The main goals are to increase strength, return muscle function, and to start incorporating activities of daily living.

As they improve, stroke patients are moved to a telemetry unit. At Eisenhower, The Joint Commission accredited Stroke Unit is located on Three North where a Physical Therapist may begin standing activities, balance exercises, and further the progression of a patient's gait. An Occupational Therapist may begin to facilitate the process of re-learning the daily activities of getting dressed, bathing, and grooming. A Speech Therapist may re-assess the swallow function, for example, to allow progression from thick to thinner liquids. As the patient recovers, a decision is formulated whether the patient will go home, or go to an inpatient rehabilitation unit where therapy may be provided three hours per day, or go to a skilled nursing facility for further recovery.

Stroke patients may receive some home therapy until they are no longer homebound and are able to physically transfer to a car and tolerate a short ride to the outpatient therapy center. This is an important step in the rehabilitation process as the individual can now access the many programs and facilities an outpatient center offers, and can return to some community level activities.

At Eisenhower Medical Center, the Physical Therapy Department has a comprehensive Stroke Rehabilitation Program to address patients' needs. Eisenhower has the Valley's only comprehensive Balance Institute, which features the SMART Balance Master System to improve balance, weight shifting, and gait function; the Bioness® Foot Drop System, which utilizes electrical stimulation; a complete Activities of Daily Living Lab to practice bathroom transfers, kitchen and laundry activities; and continued speech and augmentative communication, cognitive retention, and swallow assessment and rehabilitation.

also coordinates the Stroke Support Group, one of the largest and most successful support groups in the Valley. In addition, the department has just become one of only five centers in the United States (including the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and Emory University School of Medicine) to participate in the research study "Sub- Acute Stroke Rehabilitation with AMES" which utilizes a device that provides assisted movement of a joint with enhanced sensation. Individuals who have had a recent stroke (within the last four months) may be eligible to participate in this state-of-the-art research project.

Eisenhower Medical Center's team of Physical, Occupational, and Speech therapists thrive on the challenge of stroke rehabilitation, and enjoy the opportunity to use their expertise assisting stroke patients. For more information about these programs and services, please call Eisenhower Rehabilitation Services at 760-773-1530.