

SCI News

A publication by the Spinal Cord Injury Program at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital.

Issue #2; Fall/Winter 2006



New Fitness Program

Mary Free Bed's Spinal Cord Injury Program is excited to offer a new fitness and wellness component to its inpatient therapy program. Since January 2006, the Spinal Cord Injury Program has been working in collaboration with the David D. Hunting YMCA, located in downtown Grand Rapids. The Hunting YMCA is the designated facility where therapists assist patients to implement fitness programs aimed at helping them attain their optimal level of physical fitness in a real-world environment. Since the program began, more than 50 patients have participated.

"The desire to be active doesn't diminish following an injury," says Dr. John Butzer, Mary Free Bed medical director. "The physical and mental benefits achieved from exercise, including greater strength, endurance, flexibility, and self-esteem, are important to spinal cord injured patients."

How the Program Works

Spinal Cord Injury Fitness Program therapists educate patients regarding the benefits of regular exercise. During their stay at Mary Free Bed, patients with spinal cord injuries who meet program criteria visit the YMCA with a physical therapist, occupational therapist and therapeutic recreation specialist who will help them develop exercise programs and leisure activities to implement after their discharge.

Exercise programs are customized for individual patients, taking into account their injury, functional status, endurance and personal interests. Mary Free Bed partnered with the new David D. Hunting YMCA because it provides various exercise options for people with disabilities, including weights, cardio and strengthening equipment, swimming pools, basketball courts and a rock climbing wall. The YMCA offers wheelchair users an incredible state-of-the-art, barrier-free facility – from accessible locker rooms to high-tech fitness equipment.

The gym is often an intimidating environment to initially enter for able-bodied users, but can be even more intimidating for individuals with spinal cord injuries who are in wheelchairs or use mobility devices. Therapists involved with the fitness program all agree that initially their patients have no idea what they are capable of doing on the exercise equipment or where to start. The fitness program allows newly injured individuals to see that it is possible to work out in a community environment with some adaptations. The therapists also see their patients grow in confidence throughout their visits to the YMCA.

"We give our patients the tools to function as a community member like they used to, and I have seen people become inspired to continue living healthy lifestyles after their spinal cord injury," says Heidie Snyder, recreational therapist.

"Reintegration into the community after an injury is extremely important," says Jackie Wondolowski, spinal cord injury program manager for Mary Free Bed. "The YMCA provides patients with a sense of community."

Kristy Simpson, physical therapist, agrees. "There is a sense of community and patients experience strength in numbers when there are multiple wheelchair users on the basketball floor shooting baskets."

continued on next page

Individuals participating in the program have experienced very real benefits. Kurt Stacy, a fitness program participant, reports, "my legs and arms are stronger and my transfers are easier." Sherry Damstra, another program participant, found that exercising has resulted in increased stamina and improved circulation.

In addition to establishing fitness programs, the therapists also provide education regarding what to look for in an accessible fitness facility. Following discharge, patients have the option to join the YMCA.

"If patients are from a different part of the state or region, we can direct them to a Y near their home," says Gary Wade, public relations specialist of the David D. Hunting YMCA. "We also provide financial assistance and scholarship programs for those who qualify, making access potentially available to all."



Photographed left to right:
Heidie Snyder, CTRS, PTA, Kristy Simpson, MSPT and Jim Vugteveen, MS, OTR, won the 2006 Mary Free Bed Quality Improvement Award for their development of the YMCA Fitness Program. Congratulations to Heidie, Kristy and Jim !!!

To Learn More

The Spinal Cord Injury Fitness Program is the latest example of Mary Free Bed's commitment to offering patients hope and freedom. To learn more about the program, which is available to Mary Free Bed patients, please call 616.493.9568 or 800.528.8989 or log on to www.maryfreebed.com. ■



Ask the Doctor

By **Sam Ho, MD**
Spinal Cord Injury Program
Medical Director

Several of my patients have had questions regarding maintaining their level of fitness after their spinal cord injury. This article addresses common questions with answers from my medical perspective.

What benefits can exercise provide for persons with spinal cord injuries?

Consistent exercise can improve your cardiovascular and respiratory systems as well as muscle function and efficiency. This can decrease the risk of heart disease, respiratory disorders and coronary artery disease. Engaging in regular exercise and maintaining good overall health can also decrease medical complications that are commonly associated with spinal cord injuries such as deep vein thromboses, skin problems and urinary tract infections.

Are there any risks?

While exercise is a great way to strengthen and improve your body's overall function, there are some conditions that could be worsened by exercise. One of these conditions is deep vein thrombosis, which is a blood clot in the legs. A clot that disengages from the wall of a vein can create a very serious, life-threatening situation. Anyone with deep vein thrombosis who desires to begin an exercise program should definitely consult with their doctor beforehand. Another condition that needs to be closely monitored is autonomic dysreflexia. Autonomic dysreflexia occurs in people with a spinal cord injury at or above the thoracic level 6 (T6). It is a sudden rise in blood pressure, due to an abnormal response to a problem somewhere in your body. It is usually caused by a bladder or bowel problem. This is an emergency situation that needs immediate attention and can be life-threatening, so it is important to know what the symptoms are and to pay close attention to your condition while you exercise. Some milder impediments to exercise are dizziness, body temperature fluctuations, pressure sores and muscle spasticity. These can make exercise more of a challenge, but being aware of these problems and planning accordingly can prevent them from becoming a hindrance. The most important thing to

remember is to consult a professional (such as your doctor or a trained exercise professional) before beginning to exercise. When exercise is conducted correctly and in a safe manner, it will provide great benefit to your overall health and wellness.

How do I find a fitness center that can accommodate my needs?

There are many options available when it comes to fitness centers. Local YMCAs, community centers, gyms, and health clubs are some of the places you can enjoy a good workout. There are several things you must consider about a fitness center before making your choice. There should be accessible parking spaces, automatic entrance doors, and access to drinking fountains, snack machines and phones. The bathroom stalls, locker rooms, showers and benches should also be easy for you to use. Fitness equipment should be spaced in a way that makes it accessible. Much of the equipment does not need to be modified for wheelchair users, although "adaptive" equipment is more convenient. If you are serious about finding a fitness center, the best way to determine if these criteria are present is just to call and ask. Do a little research on all of the fitness centers in your area until you find one that will allow you easy access to what you need and make you feel comfortable and confident in your exercise program. If facilities are unaware of what you need, take the time to educate them. You might have a few more options as a result.

What should I do before beginning an exercise program?

The first thing you should do is consult your doctor. Ask about the risks exercise can pose with regard to your specific medical condition and the potential impact of any prescribed medications. Ask your doctor for a referral to a trained exercise professional that could tailor a program to meet your specific needs.

What can I do in addition to exercise in order to remain healthy?

Proper nutrition in addition to exercise can do a great deal to keep your body healthy. You should drink about two quarts of water per day, which will help prevent urinary tract infections and regulate body temperature, digestion, and bowel management. This is especially important to remember while exercising. Even if you do not appear to be sweating excessively, it is very important to maintain a high level of hydration in order to help prevent dehydration. Managing stress is also important because people who are constantly experiencing symptoms of stress are at a higher risk for serious health problems, addiction and depression. Some other activities that will improve and maintain health are getting enough sleep, cutting down or eliminating the use of caffeine, alcohol and tobacco, being socially active and participating regularly in physical activities.

What should be the goal of my exercise program?

Your goals will partially depend upon your level of function. One main goal to have is strengthening muscles that are weak or under-utilized. Start with little or no resistance and build as the exercise becomes easier. Again, you should consult your doctor before beginning a program.

Why should I worry about weight management?

Weight management for those with spinal cord injuries is important because of the many health benefits it can provide. Managing weight can lower your risk for premature death and the development of some forms of cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, respiratory illness, pressure sores, urinary tract infection and urinary stones. It can also decrease feelings of anxiety, depression, and stress; improve muscle strength, endurance, self-image, and ability to get a good night's sleep; and help manage your muscle spasms, chronic pain and bowel program. The first step to losing weight is reducing your daily calorie intake. It is important, however, to maintain proper nutrition while dieting. Healthy nutrition can help give your body energy, fight infections, maintain a proper weight, and keep all of your body's systems working correctly. This means a balance of all five food groups. It is best to stay away from saturated fats, trans-fats, and excessive sugar or sodium. The majority of the food you eat should be complex carbohydrates (such as whole grain breads, beans, nuts, etc.), vegetables and fruit. Also make sure that you are getting adequate amounts of protein, fiber, and calcium. The key is to keep from overindulging in any one food group. Your doctor can also give you suggestions and guidance as to the best weight loss program for you. (For more nutrition advice, go to www.eatright.org or www.mayohealth.org.)

What type of exercise is best when beginning to exercise again?

When designing an exercise program it is important to find something that you can enjoy. A good exercise program must also be one that includes all areas of fitness such as cardiovascular fitness, strength training, endurance, and flexibility. ■

Program Staff

Sam Ho, MD, Spinal Cord Injury Medical Director

Bill Sunday, MSW, ACSW, Director, Inpatient Therapy Programs

Jackie Wondolowski, MSW, Manager, Spinal Cord Injury Program

Event Information



Featured Community Recreation Programs

Golf

Because adaptive golf is growing in popularity as a sport for the disabled, Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood hold an annual golf clinic every summer. Participating golfers include individuals with spinal cord injury, brain injury or stroke and those who are blind or have had amputations. Individuals who attend the clinic are evaluated to determine if adapted equipment and/or modifications to swing and grip are needed. A general orientation to accessing area golf courses is also available. Instruction and evaluation is provided by Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists. The Adapted Golf Clinic is held at Scott Lake Country Club in Rockford, MI, and a date for 2007 will be announced early next year. If you would like to get on our mailing list or have any questions, please call 616.242.0443.

Hand Cycle

Hand cycling has seen explosive growth in the last few years and is even being offered as a competitive division in national races including the Boston Marathon, the New York Marathon and here in Grand Rapids at the Fifth Third River Bank Run. This sport allows participants to enjoy the freedom of cycling independently or with other bicycle enthusiasts. Hand cycling can improve overall health and physical conditioning; the benefits are endless! Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital and BlazeSports: Kentwood will be offering an Adapted Hand Cycling Clinic at Bowen Station in Kentwood, MI in the spring of 2007. Hand cycling instruction will be provided by Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists. If you would be interested in receiving information about this clinic or would be interested in participating in the Hand Cycle Division of the Fifth Third River Bank Run in May 2007, please call 616.242.0443.

Special Guest



*Mike Utley, former
Detroit Lions player.*

On Tuesday, April 25, Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital and Independence Technology, manufacturer of the iBOT, hosted a collaborative event targeted toward people with disabilities (who are wheelchair users), physicians and insurance case managers. The purpose was to highlight the iBOT 4000 as well as other high-tech program/service offerings which are unique to Mary Free Bed – Biofeedback, Adaptive Sports, the YMCA Fitness Program, Parastep, Rehab Technology and Driver Rehab. This informative, motivational and invitation-only event was held in the Mary Free Bed Outpatient Therapy Center and attracted about 150 people. The evening was designed as an open house with stations that focused on each specific specialty program or service. The highlight was a motivational speech by Mike Utley, former Detroit Lions player, who sustained a spinal cord injury in a football game. The event also included artists from the Mary Free Bed Fine Arts Exhibition, a performance from the Living Light Dance Company (a dance troupe comprised of individuals with disabilities) and an iBOT demonstration by Mary Free Bed patient, Dan Wedge.

Event Calendar

Adapted Rock Climbing Clinic / February

Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood

Bikes for the Rest of Us / Last Saturday in April

Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood

Fifth Third River Bank Run / May 12, 2007 Wheelchair and Hand Cycle Division

Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed Guild

Adapted Golf Clinic / June

Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood

Adapted Water Ski Clinic / July or August

Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood

Adapted Canoe and Kayak Clinic / August

Sponsored By: Mary Free Bed and BlazeSports: Kentwood

2006 Midwest Indoor Wheelchair Championships

On July 21, 22 and 23, the Grand Rapids Wheelchair Sports Association proudly hosted a United States Tennis Association/International Tennis Federation sanctioned tournament which attracted over 70 athletes from all over the world. This tennis tournament is the only one in Michigan and the only regional tournament on the wheelchair circuit in the Midwest!

The athletes participated in a three-day wheelchair tennis tournament at Champion Health and Fitness Center in Rockford, Michigan. A total of \$9,000 in prize money was awarded.

If you are interested in wheelchair tennis, volunteering or supporting this great event, please contact Lynn Bender at lynncurt10s@yahoo.com.

Special thanks to Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital for sponsoring the event and donating \$9,000 in prize money!!!



First Official One up/One down Tennis League in the US

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) is promoting a new tennis concept called One up/One down tennis. This model pairs a wheelchair tennis player with an able bodied player to form a doubles team.

The concept is catching on fast, and Grand Rapids is the first official league registered through USTA to start a team tennis competition. A grant awarded by the USTA funded a pilot program that was recently held at Orchard Hills Athletic Club. There were two teams with six wheelchair players on each team and at least six able bodied players on each team. The team captains determined their line ups based upon players' skill levels. They chose a 1st, 2nd and 3rd doubles team and one exhibition team.

The four matches played were very competitive and provided spouses, family members, friends and local club players the opportunity to participate. The league hopes to hold another competition next winter and expand further if possible.

Spinal Cord Injury Support Group

The Spinal Cord Injury Support Group is meeting the 4th Monday of every month from 6:00pm to 7:30pm in the 2nd Floor Conference Room at Mary Free Bed. This group is for individuals who are 18 years old and older. The purpose of this group is to provide support and education to individuals with spinal cord injuries as well as their families and friends. We offer open discussion of life after spinal cord injury and provide a venue for interesting topics and speakers.

Our first meeting was Monday, June 26, 2006 where we discussed specific meeting ideas including: our Biofeedback Program, quality of life surrounding adapted sports and travel, home modifications, transitioning from hospital to home (and the speed bumps that are experienced during this transition), issues related to neuropathy, nerve pain, muscle spasms, how to increase circulation and autonomic dysreflexia.

Gale and Connie Lynch who attended the meeting stated, "After attending the initial meeting of the SCI Support Group, we were excited about the possibilities. We are anxious to be able to hear from people on important topics such as recreation, traveling, transportation in general, updates on medical information, etc."

The facilitators of this group are Andrea Myers, LMSW and Kelly Merz, CTRS. Andrea has been employed at Mary Free Bed since January 2000. She is the primary social worker on the SCI Program. Andrea has worked in medical social work for close to fourteen years and has developed a support group for women living with Multiple Sclerosis. Kelly has been employed at Mary Free Bed since October 1996. She developed a Stroke Support Group and mentor program that have been meeting since May 1997. Kelly is the co-coordinator of the Mary Free Bed Adapted Golf and Adapted Hand Cycle Clinics. She also assisted in coordinating the Mary Free Bed Adapted Rock Climbing and Adapted Water Ski Clinics. Kelly personally experienced a spinal cord injury in August 2000 and has an incomplete T 5/6 injury.

If you would be interested in being added to the support group mailing list, please call 616.242.0445. We will only use your address to send out monthly flyers so that you are aware of upcoming meetings.

If you have questions or would like further information, please call Andrea Myers at 616.242.0368 or Kelly Merz at 616.242.0443.

Alumni News

Bryan Barten (1995) reports that he has a new job at the University of Arizona Disability Resource Center. He is now the head coach of wheelchair rugby and wheelchair tennis. "I have been playing both sports for eight years. We have 12 athletes on the rugby team and eight on the tennis team. In addition to on court coaching, my responsibilities include recruitment of athletes, coordination of practices and tournaments, and supervision of weight training. The wheelchair rugby team is open to students and community members through tryouts. Our goal for this year is a National Championship. Participation on the tennis travel team is limited to students and alumni of the University of Arizona. The program makes every effort possible to provide equipment for our athletes secondary to limited scholarship dollars. If you are interested in joining the wheelchair rugby team, please contact me at: bbarten@email.arizona.edu."



Carrie King (2004) and her husband, Stacie, are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Kahlan Rachelle King on January 4, 2006. Kahlan was a healthy 7 pound 2 ounce, 19 inch long beautiful baby girl. "To become a mother has really given me hope. I love it and she has definitely made me a lot happier." Carrie and her

family continue to stay active with swimming and riding bikes throughout the trails of Reed City, MI.



Matt Strugar-Fritsch (2003) recently graduated with honors from Michigan State University (Spring, 2006) with a degree in Marketing. Matt has moved to Sacramento, California to work for Disabled Sports USA, a non-profit adapted sports organization. He is promoting adapted sports and recreation opportunities in Lake

Tahoe, Sacramento and the San Francisco Bay Area. "Adapted sports and recreational opportunities at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital helped me stay positive throughout my recovery. I'm looking forward to working in the field."

Welcome Therapy Staff



*Photographed left to right.
Jackie Madsen
Ashley Larimer
Tina Monahan
Amy Korn*

The Spinal Cord Injury Program has added four new full-time therapy positions. Please join us in welcoming:

Amy Korn, PT, is originally from Logansport, Indiana. She moved to Michigan to attend Central Michigan University. After graduation, Amy obtained a position with Spectrum Health, Butterworth in the Intensive Care Unit. Amy is married to Matt and just celebrated six wonderful months of marriage! They attend Kentwood Community Church and enjoy playing tennis.

Ashley Larimer, MSOT, ATC, graduated from Michigan State University in 2003 with a Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology with an emphasis in Athletic Training. She was in the Athletic Training Program at MSU for four years and worked with collegiate athletes and team physicians for both contact and non-contact sports. She recently graduated with her Master of Science in Occupational Therapy from Grand Valley State University. Ashley is interested in fashion and enjoys gardening.

Jackie Madsen, PT, grew up in South Dakota and graduated from the University of Minnesota. Jackie is a newlywed; she and her husband, Shane, just moved to Grand Rapids from Rochester, Minnesota. Shane is an Emergency Medicine Resident at Spectrum Health, Butterworth. Jackie has prior experience in inpatient rehab and ortho settings. Jackie enjoys running and playing with her two Rottweilers.

Tina Monahan, SLP, is originally from the East side of the state and grew up in Deckerville. Tina is a recent graduate of Western Michigan University. She previously worked at Hope Network for three years as a speech assistant. Tina is married to Shawn and has two pets, a cat and a dog. Her hobbies include walking/jogging, playing volleyball, planting flowers and spending time with her friends.

Welcome Nursing Staff



Photographed
left to right.
Tara Smith, RN,
Elizabeth Tillman, RN
Alicia Gray, NT

The Spinal Cord Injury Program has also added six new nursing staff positions. Please join us in welcoming:

Alicia Gray, NT, is in the middle of getting her nursing degree at Grand Rapids Community College. She wants to be an RN and thinks she would enjoy doing traveling nursing or joining medical teams that work overseas. Alicia previously worked at the Spectrum Health Butterworth campus for 4 1/2 years as a nursing technician in orthopedics, ER and bed management.



Stephanie Host, NT, is a CENA whose career goal is to become an RN or an ultrasound technician. She also works in an "on call" position at the Christian Rest Home. Stephanie is married with two children. She enjoys spending time with her family, ice skating and walking.

Ashley Shirey, NT, previously worked at Walker Medical, St. Mary's Living Center, and as a CNA providing home care through Health Partners, Inc. She is currently on the waiting list for the Nursing Program at Grand Rapids Community College. Ashley is familiar with MFB.

Her sister (who has cerebral palsy) has come here for therapy after surgeries.



Haria Smith, NT, is a CENA who graduated from Saginaw Arthur Hill High School and attended Delta Community College in Bay City. She states her career goals are to earn her BSN and become a CRNA. Haria previously worked for the Saginaw County Mental Health Authority (17 yrs.), Saginaw Covenant Healthcare (4 yrs.), and Aleta Lutz VA Medical Center (2 yrs.). Haria and her husband are raising three sons and one daughter: Marcellus, 18; Jovan, 18; Jamal, 14; and Raven, 16 (four teenagers!). Haria likes to read, listen to music and spend time with her family.

Tara Smith, RN, is an RN who graduated from Grand Rapids Community College in May, 2005 and would like to pursue a Bachelors degree in nursing. After graduation, Tara took an RN position at Spectrum Butterworth in Medical Critical Care. Before becoming a nurse, Tara worked at the Spectrum Health Kent Community campus as a nurses' aide. Tara is engaged to Lorenzo, and is a proud aunt to triplet nephews! She likes to travel - going to amusement parks, camping or on road trips. She also loves to watch movies.

Elizabeth Tillman, RN, previously worked in our TPE pool as a student nurse tech before she graduated with her BSN from Grand Valley State University. She plans to pursue her Master's degree in the future. She has worked as an RN at Freedom Village in Holland and at Holland Hospital. She and her husband, Jeff, have been married 10 years and have two sons. Elizabeth's hobbies include reading, cooking, gardening and being outdoors with her kids.

Stay in Touch

Send your personal news and updates to:
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SCI Program News: 2006 Symposium

**“Life with a Spinal Cord Injury –
A Journey Towards Independence”
Friday, September 22, 2006 • 7:30 am – 4:45 pm
Crowne Plaza of Grand Rapids**



We are pleased to have Rory A. Cooper, PhD from the University of Pittsburgh as our keynote speaker. Dr. Cooper will be presenting, “Living with a Spinal Cord Injury – One Man’s Journey Through Time.” Dr. Cooper is an SCI survivor and world-renowned lecturer. He has spent his life pushing the boundaries of wheelchair technology to provide mobility to his fellow SCI survivors.

We are also excited to have David R. Gater, Jr., MD, PhD, a national lecturer on spinal cord injury and rehabilitation, discussing what is new in SCI research as well as the benefits of intensive therapy. Polly A. Swingle, PT, co-founder and co-owner of *The Recovery Project* will also discuss intensive SCI therapy. Bernard S. Brucker, PhD, ABPP, from the University of Miami School of Medicine will present on biofeedback applications, along with Mary Free Bed staff members, Brittany Moore, MA, OTR and Megan Potter, DPT. Bruce Springer, MD, a consultant in Addiction Medicine with Grand Rapids Addiction Medicine Specialists will deal with the topics of alcoholism, addiction and pain management. The Symposium will also include a panel presentation by Dr. Cooper, Mary Free Bed therapists and SCI survivors.

Interested in Attending?

For more information or to register, go on-line to www.maryfreebed.com or call 616.242.0476.

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