Dear Friends,

Autumn has come to New York and with it much to report regarding our plans to reinvigorate the research program at the Rusk Institute. I am very pleased to welcome Tamara Bushnik, Ph.D. to our faculty as the new Director of Research. Dr. Bushnik received her Doctorate in Neuroscience at the University of Ottawa in 1992 and most recently was on the professional staff of the Rehabilitation Medicine Department of Santa Clara Valley Medical Center. While at Santa Clara, she served as Project Co-Director of the Spinal Cord Injury Model System of Care, funded by the National Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). She also continuously served there as Project Co-Director of the NIDRR funded Northern California Traumatic Brain Injury Model System of Care as well as Director of Research for the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine.

Dr. Bushnik’s career has been marked by numerous accomplishments in the realms of research and leadership. Immediately prior to her arrival in New York, she was principle investigator for the Women’s Health Program at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.

Women’s Health – Focusing on Wellness

Tucked away on the fourth floor of Rusk Institute on 34th street is the Outpatient Physical Therapy Women’s Health unit. The Women’s Health program began in 2000 and was initially housed in the general Outpatient Physical Therapy department on the ground floor of Rusk. Since then, the program has expanded sufficiently to earn a distinct space. The program offers a full complement of Physical Therapy services for conditions related to pregnancy and postpartum, pelvic floor dysfunction including pelvic pain, weakness, and urinary incontinence, osteoporosis, cancer rehabilitation, and lymphedema therapy. Therapists on the unit provide extensive rehabilitation services daily to women seeking relief from pain, musculoskeletal and neurological ailments, and difficulties performing functional activities.

On any given day, a Physical Therapist may treat a breast cancer survivor, struggling to regain strength and flexibility, a woman with urinary leakage, who is uncomfortable when out in the community, or an expectant mother experiencing low back pain caused by pregnancy. The therapist custom designs a program with the optimal treatment approach for each patient. She combines manual therapy, with flexibility, strength and cardiovascular training, and provides education on posture and precautions.

The program’s philosophy emphasizes well-being and return to optimal health and wellness. The Physical Therapists that have chosen to work in this specialty area are extensively trained and highly skilled. Their dedication and commitment result in exceptional care and treatment.

Their patients become more than just clients; they are partners, working towards common goals to maximize function, health and well being.

For more information about the services provided by the Women’s Health Outpatient Physical Therapy, please visit www.ruskinstitute.org or call (212) 263-5601.

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Steven R. Flanagan, M.D.
Chairman and Medical Director of
The Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine

Elizabeth focuses on regaining posture, flexibility, and arm strength after breast cancer treatment.

Ting-Ting Kuo, PT, DPT, WCS, CLT
The Initiative for Women with Disabilities (IWD) is a multi-disciplinary Center that empowers women and young girls with physical disabilities to pursue healthy lifestyles. As a premier Center of Excellence for women with physical disabilities, the IWD offers a full complement of services including: gynecology and primary care, nutrition consultations, mind-body physical therapy, social work services, and support groups.

The Center offers accessible space, services and programs which are tailored to meet the needs of women with disabilities. The site is equipped with a fully accessible examination room, a wheelchair-accessible weight scale as well as a comfortable and adjustable gynecology examination table with handrails for additional safety. In addition to providing medical services, the Center offers classes in Yoga, Tai Chi, Belly Dance, Strength & Tone, Pilates, Self Defense, Arthritis Exercise, and Contemporary Dance. The classes are designed to meet individual's abilities and exercise may be performed in a seated and/or standing position. The Center is the only one of its kind in the Tri-State area in that it also offers a full compliment of wellness services including: Acupuncture, Reiki, Reflexology and Massage Therapy.

In addition to providing the aforementioned services, the Center assists participants with disabilities to return to productive lives in the community. IWD participant, Gigi Pardo-Lord has multiple disabilities and was diagnosed with lupus in 1992 and Sjogren's syndrome in 1993. Eight years ago, she was introduced to the IWD by her Physical Therapist at NYU Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine, and she felt a sense of hope that she hadn’t felt in a long time. Gigi participates in exercise fitness classes and wellness services offered at the Center, which enable her to manage her disabilities effectively. Gigi's motivation for exercising is to maintain her overall physical health, well being, and personal growth. The fitness programs at the IWD encourage mindful activities to help her discover more about herself. For the past few years, Gigi has dedicated her life to enriching the lives of others at the IWD by assisting new participants in classes and actively recommending the support services of IWD. “Giving back to the community is a way to help others to experience some of the opportunities I have experienced.” - Pardo-Lord, IWD participant.

For further information and to register for all services and programs at the IWD call 212-598-6429 or visit our web site for a complete description of the IWD services and programs: http://www.iwdwellness.org.
More than 2400 adult patients received inpatient rehabilitation treatment at Rusk during 2008. The average age of our adult patients was 71, compared to the regional average age of 69. Patients were admitted for inpatient rehabilitation with a myriad of impairments, but the most common included orthopedic conditions (41%), cardiac/pulmonary conditions (24%), stroke (12%), neurological conditions (7%), and brain dysfunctions (8%). Most of our patients were admitted from our own acute care hospitals, Tisch Hospital and NYUHJD (73%). This adjacency provides a breadth of knowledge and subspecialty consultants, which is rarely available in freestanding inpatient rehabilitation facilities. The average length of stay was 14 days and led to an average improvement of 23 points on the FIM™, a well-recognized measure of functional independence, indicating a reduced burden of care for these individuals. Seventy-five percent (75%) of our patients were discharged to the community, above the regional standard of 71%.

Post discharge satisfaction scores were collected from 27% of patients using the Press-Ganey/Inpatient Rehabilitation Survey to allow for benchmark comparisons. 93% of patients reported that they were satisfied with their admission and 94% would likely recommend Rusk to family and friends in need of inpatient rehabilitation. 91% of patients felt that the care and treatment they received was well coordinated, and 92% felt that the therapy they received helped them meet their rehab goals. As indicated on the graph below, department-specific results indicated fairly high ratings for therapy services.

Comments from our Patients

“The therapists made me feel that I could do what they asked me to do and had been afraid to do all my life. They were right.”

“Each individual was professional, courteous, and very patient with all my questions.”

“Every detail of discharge and health care was explained and attended to.”

“You operate at the highest level of professionalism, care and performance possible.”
At this critical juncture in health care, all eyes are on health care providers to provide seamless, efficient and effective treatment across the continuum of care. In order to do this successfully, patients and families need to be well informed and involved in the process of care. In addition, channels of communication need to be open for clinicians across departments and even facilities, with a central focus on the patient.

Here at NYU, the Office of Continuing Care (OCC) focuses on enhancing patient and family education, as well as communication between clinicians in various settings. Departments within NYU are coming together to benefit patients and families through initiatives such as the weekly Transition from the Hospital class, which provides families with the vocabulary necessary to negotiate the continuum of care. Another interdisciplinary effort spearheaded by OCC has produced educational materials and a bedside support team to assist patients and families to make educated choices about feeding tube placement.

In order to enhance collaboration between settings, the OCC has organized visits to area subacute centers, Long Term Acute Care (LTAC) hospitals, day programs and hospice hospitals. During these visits, NYU staff learn directly from their clinical counterparts about each facility’s scope of Medical and Rehabilitation services. Liaisons from subacute rehab facilities and LTAC hospitals have also come to NYU to share information about their facilities’ rehabilitation and clinical capabilities and to discuss the transition of care process. An interactive lunchtime panel presentation is now offered regularly at NYU, featuring representatives from various post acute care facilities and a presentation on their programs and services.

The OCC is also developing tools to capture the most up-to-date information on post acute care facilities. For example, the new ‘clinically complex matrix’ allows NYU clinicians to sort through area nursing facilities and LTAC hospitals by borough or specialty service to identify possible placement options for complex patients. Doctors, nurses, and Social Workers in the Emergency Department now have access to a new tool as well. The OCC has compiled a directory, listing names and phone numbers of physicians, nurse managers, and admissions directors at area skilled nursing homes. The directory allows the team to speak directly with a clinician at the sending facility and improve communication about patients being (re)admitted to NYU through the Emergency Room.

The Office of Continuing Care is proud to support the medical center in transitioning patients to the right place at the right time.

the whole story

The Whole Story is published by the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine. Please call 212-263-8830 for more information about our programs and services.

For information on how to donate to the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine please call Christopher E. Sickels at 212-404-3646.

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