



Hope After A Stroke Can Be Realized

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The National Stroke Association chose “Hope” as the title of its Stroke Recovery Guide. Hope to gain more independence, hope to talk better and hope to stop falling are all things a stroke survivor may want. Rehabilitation and therapy are crucial in achieving these desires.

Stroke rehabilitation usually begins at the hospital as soon as a patient is medically stable. Depending upon your individual needs, the therapy may include acute care (at an inpatient hospital such as Alton Memorial), sub-acute care (such as the AMH Transitional Care Unit), home health care (such as BJC Home Health), long-term care facilities (such as Eunice Smith Home) and outpatient facilities (often hospital-based such as the AMH Human Motion Institute).

The therapy provided in each setting is different depending upon the patient’s needs and goals at that time. As a therapist, I am rewarded by getting to know each patient and his or her family, and getting to work with them throughout each level of care.

It is understandable to focus on getting back home after a stroke. Too often, rehabilitation stops there. Once home you need to be safe and functional within your home and the community. The goal should be to achieve the best possible long- term outcome and independence.

Outpatient rehabilitation has been shown to be beneficial for months and sometimes even years after a stroke. It starts with a conversation with your physician and a referral. During an initial evaluation, you, your family and your therapist establish goals for treatment.

Physical therapy helps restore physical functioning and skills like walking and range of motion, and addresses issues such as partial or one-sided paralysis, faulty balance and

foot drop. Occupational therapy involves re-learning the skills needed for everyday living including eating, going to the bathroom, dressing and taking care of yourself. Speech and language therapy involves techniques to reduce and compensate for problems communicating, thinking or swallowing often seen after a stroke.

Reading and writing are also usually impaired. Speech and language therapy can teach you and your family methods for coping with these communication challenges. Speech and language therapists also work with memory loss and other “thinking” problems brought about by the stroke. A therapist can teach you and your family ways to help you with these problems and regain function.

At times, after the diagnosis of a stroke, it is difficult to look forward to something or to believe in a positive outcome. Having hope is a vital component in healing. There is hope for stroke recovery.

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