About the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute

- UPMC is ranked by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top hospitals in the country for rehabilitation.
- The UPMC Rehabilitation Institute is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in inpatient rehabilitation, brain injury, spinal cord injury, and stroke.
- Stroke rehabilitation at the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute is certified by the Joint Commission.
- Our experts combine extensive clinical experience with advanced technology and research to offer our patients cutting-edge treatments.
- We are one of only seven institutions with both SCI and TBI Model System designations from the NIDRR.

The UPMC Rehabilitation Institute is proud to provide patients with a multidisciplinary team of experts, including physiatrists, rehabilitation nurses, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and neuropsychologists. These experts are dedicated to helping patients meet their rehabilitation goals and get back to doing the things they love, following brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, stroke, and other significant events.

With eight inpatient facilities, each located in acute care hospitals, we are part of the largest rehabilitation network in western Pennsylvania, and our recent expansion at UPMC Passavant is making this care accessible to even more patients. Through the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute, patients also have access to clinical trials and technologies that are not available anywhere else in the region.

Everyone at the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute knows that rehab is hard work, and so the rehab team also extends to include patients’ family and friends, as well as volunteers like former patient Bill Hawse and his therapy dog, Rudy, who are featured in this issue.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Rehab Update. To learn more about inpatient rehabilitation at the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute, please call 1-877-AT-REHAB (28-73422) or visit UPMC.com/RehabInstitute.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL L. BONINGER, MD
Director, UPMC Rehabilitation Institute
Professor and UPMC Endowed Chair
Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Whether patients are recovering from knee replacement surgery, a sudden stroke, or a debilitating accident, starting rehabilitation treatment as quickly as possible is an important step toward returning to a full, productive life.

“We strategically utilize a combination of physical, occupational, and speech therapy with specialized nursing and medical care in order to help patients overcome their disabilities so that they may return home,” explains Jaspaal Singh, MD, medical director of the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute at UPMC Passavant. “We also involve families and caregivers to further enhance the personalization of the rehabilitation program during the patients’ recovery period.”

Expertise Plus Continuity of Care
The UPMC Rehabilitation Institute at UPMC Passavant expanded from 12 to 24 beds to meet the growing demands from communities and counties north of Pittsburgh. UPMC Passavant offers evidenced-based care and the newest available technologies for patients recovering from strokes, hip fractures, joint replacements, neurologic disorders, cancer, congestive heart failure, and other medical conditions.

“Our newly expanded rehabilitation unit is located in an acute care hospital by design, thus allowing patients immediate access to specialists and services needed to maximize recovery,” says Tim Kagle, executive director of the UPMC Rehabilitation Network. “We’re able to care for patients with medically complex conditions, as well as those requiring intensive rehabilitation.”

Eligibility for Inpatient Rehabilitation
To participate in inpatient rehabilitation, patients must:

• Be diagnosed with a condition requiring an acute (in-hospital) rehabilitation program.
• Be medically stable.
• Have needs that can be addressed through rehabilitation.
• Be able to tolerate and benefit from at least three hours of therapy daily.
• Make progress toward functional goals within a reasonable time frame.

To refer patients to the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute at UPMC Passavant, contact Jeff Sybert, RN, rehab nurse liaison, at 412-748-7676 or sybertja@upmc.edu.
Division of Neuropsychology and Rehabilitation Psychology: Providing Cognitive Assessment and Emotional Support as Part of the Rehabilitation Team

Psychologists of the Division of Neuropsychology and Rehabilitation Psychology are an integral part of the multidisciplinary teams at the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute. The group at UPMC Mercy includes four inpatient psychologists and one outpatient psychologist, all of whom are faculty members in the University of Pittsburgh Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

“Our role involves supporting the patient, supporting the families, and supporting the staff with various rehabilitative, coping, and educational strategies,” says Patricia Arenth, PhD, director of the division. “Rehabilitation and care do not end when a patient is discharged from the hospital. Our goals are to provide support throughout the rehabilitation process, and to continue to develop additional inpatient and outpatient programming in the future.”

Neuropsychology and Rehabilitation Psychology

The division’s areas of practice focus on assessment and interventions to assist in the cognitive recovery and emotional adjustment of individuals with complex medical issues as a result of neurological illness or injuries. For patients with stroke, traumatic brain injury, or other neurological conditions, neuropsychological testing may be used to assess cognitive functioning, including skills related to memory, attention, and problem solving. Many patients and families also are working to adjust to significant changes in health and functioning related to the injury or illness. In response, psychologists trained in rehabilitation psychology assist with the emotional aspects of recovery and support patients and families during their adjustment to disability, with a focus on positive outcomes and quality of life.

Multidisciplinary Collaboration

Psychologists assist the medical, nursing, and therapy staff in the development of treatment plans to maximize a patient’s ability to fully participate in rehabilitation.

“Due to emotional or cognitive changes, patients’ behavioral responses may interfere with their ability to take part in therapy,” says Dr. Arenth. “We help the rehabilitation staff to find the best approaches for working with patients to help them get the most out of their rehab experience.”

By focusing on the person as a whole, rehabilitation teams recognize that the long-term success of patients and families requires positive adjustment, education, and management of health conditions, complications, cognitive limitations, and psychosocial and emotional health, with the eventual goal of reintegration into the community. Our psychologists are specially trained to assist patients and families in understanding and managing barriers to success, such as depression, anxiety, and cognitive limitations.

Inpatient Psychological Services — Part of the Care Team

A primary psychologist is assigned to each of the four inpatient rehabilitation units at UPMC Mercy. The psychologists have clinical expertise in the most appropriate assessments and interventions for each specific diagnosis on their unit, and they tailor treatments accordingly. Our psychologists function as part of the patient’s team of care providers. They are available on-site daily to assist with one-on-one assessment and treatment, or to support patients during their rehabilitation activities.

Brain Injury Unit

Hilly Rubinsky, PhD, sees patients with traumatic and acquired brain injuries. Types of acquired brain injury may include brain tumors, infections, or ruptured aneurysms. Many of these patients may be in the early stages of waking up after coma or are responding at low levels of functioning. Dr. Rubinsky works with the rehab team from the time of admission in order to assess brain function, memory, concentration, and visual and perceptual abilities based on individual injury or disease cause and progression. Periodic reassessments track the recovery and rehabilitation processes. Additional assessments and support are provided as the patient becomes more alert and able to participate.

Stroke Unit

All patients on the stroke unit at UPMC Mercy are referred to meet with Christine Paul, PsyD, ABPP, who addresses any neurocognitive or emotional functioning changes that have occurred post-stroke. Depending on the age and life roles of the patient, considerations about caregiving and returning home after injury are evaluated carefully. Education and counseling also are available to aid patients and families in coping with issues related to stroke, such as
adjustment to disability, concerns with body image, intimacy and sexual functioning, change in family roles, or lifestyle changes.

**General Rehabilitation Unit**

Dr. Paul also provides support to patients and families in the general rehabilitation unit at UPMC Mercy on a consultation basis. Patients on the general rehab unit may have survived a burn injury or have a complex, debilitating medical condition, such as multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson’s disease, or Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS), that requires a prolonged hospitalization.

**Spinal Cord Injury Unit**

Dr. Arenth recently became the primary neuropsychologist on the spinal cord injury (SCI) unit, along with Richard Barbara, PhD, who continues to work part-time on the unit after providing many years of expertise to the program. Dr. Arenth and Dr. Barbara provide support for patients with spinal cord injury and their families, in addition to those who may have cancer, infection, MS, or other diagnoses that impact the spinal cord. Impairment often includes loss of sensation and motor control, impacting walking and mobility, self-care, bowel and bladder functioning, and sexual functioning.

**Outpatient Psychological Services**

The outpatient clinical neuropsychology program provides neuropsychological testing services to patients with traumatic brain injuries, strokes, and other neurological and psychiatric conditions. Tad Gorske, PhD, provides neuropsychological and rehabilitation psychology services for patients who have been discharged from the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute, as well as patients referred from the community. Dr. Gorske provides follow-up testing and exams to help guide rehabilitation programs for patients who wish to return to work and school, or improve their overall function. Dr. Gorske’s office is in the same suite as the attending physicians for inpatient rehabilitation, giving patients the ability to see all of their specialists in one place.

For more information on neuropsychology and rehabilitation psychology services, visit UPMC.com/RehabInstitute. To make a referral for outpatient testing, call 412-232-8901. For questions about inpatient services, call 412-232-4088.

In 2008, Bill Hawse suffered three strokes over a period of five weeks. While he was relearning cognitive and motor skills at the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute at UPMC Mercy, Bill was visited by a few therapy dogs. He credits that visit with lifting his spirits and inspiring him to have a therapy dog of his own.

“When I was in the hospital and experienced what the therapy dogs can do, I said ‘I want to become a therapy handler and get my dog back to UPMC Mercy,’” Bill says.

A few months after Bill completed therapy, he and his wife were watching their son’s dog, Rudy, for two weeks. At the time, Bill was having trouble walking and admittedly experiencing depression. During Rudy’s stay, Bill began taking short walks with him, which eventually turned into longer strolls, and Bill regained his strength — physically and mentally.

When Bill’s son returned from his trip, he asked Bill if he would like to keep Rudy since they had been doing so well together. Bill eagerly accepted and followed through on his personal goal of becoming a therapy dog handler.

“The very first visit that Rudy ever took as a therapy dog was back to UPMC,” Bill says. “It was really neat because Rudy did so well, and I could relate to the folks in rehab.”

Bill and Rudy have since expanded their visits to include other places in addition to the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute.

“It grew from there. I joined a therapy dog group,” Bill says. “We do various visits to hospitals, to nursing homes, and to schools two or three times a week.”

Bill and Rudy continue to visit the rehab patients at UPMC Mercy regularly. Bill credits the experience and dedication of the therapists and physicians at the UPMC Rehabilitation Institute, and of course Rudy, with helping him to get back on his feet, stay positive, and continue working through daily obstacles.

“Things happen for a reason, and I don’t think I could be any more fortunate than I am today because of what happened to me. I really believe that,” Bill says. “Rudy is still that inspiration for me, and I have a great time with him.”

To read Bill’s patient story, visit UPMC.com/MyRehab.