



REHABILITATION SERVICES

Child Life Specialists and Pediatric Facility Dog Program Enhance Pediatric Care

As part of the pediatric inpatient therapy program, Tampa General Hospital has a dedicated team of Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLS). Their role is to reduce the stress and anxiety of children during their hospitalizations as well as enhance their family's experience during their stay. They are experts in child development and promote effective coping through education of procedures and diagnoses, preparation, and play. They work closely with the pet therapy and pediatric facility dog program to enhance the stay of the pediatric patients.

Since the TGH Children's Hospital serves highly acute and complex patients, the Child Life Specialist program requested funds to create a pediatric facility dog program to enhance services, applying best practices from similar organizations at TGH. Over the last couple years, two pediatric facility dogs, Belle and Millie, were selected and trained to serve the pediatric patients of trauma, inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation.

In the past, the children have received strictly volunteer-based pet therapy visits once a week for one hour. After funding and training from PetSmart Charities and Valor Service Dogs, the hospital implemented a pediatric facility dog program, featuring Belle the Golden Retriever and Millie, the Labrador Golden Retriever mix. The dog's work schedule consists of a 40-hour week with time built in for naps, down time, play, and outside breaks. Two TGH team members host the dogs, providing housing and care for the dogs during off-shift times. The team members bring the dog to and from the hospital and deliver Belle and Millie to the Child Life team.

The schedule primarily focuses on weekday services with the occasional night and weekend rotation for special events. The dogs do not make visits to any intensive care areas for infection prevention reasons but visit with families in those waiting rooms.

Facility dogs greatly impact the hospital's patient-centered care approach for the pediatric patients for many reasons. Tampa General is the leading regional treatment center for pediatric burn, kidney transplant and inpatient rehabilitation. Treatment for these patients includes meeting numerous recuperative milestones that are greatly enhanced through routine pet therapy. The dogs provide



The goal of the pediatric facility dogs when working with our rehab patients is to motivate them to reach their goals quicker. Many kids are motivated to participate when the facility dogs are present. We have seen time after time a patient willing to walk further or work harder when a dog is involved in their therapy session. We have also used the facility dogs as part of a reward system to encourage completion of goals.

support for the pediatric staff during sensitive cases as well as team members from other departments who interact with TGH Children's Hospital.

For facility dogs, the best candidates are dogs who are most comfortable with a larger number of people instead of just one. Dogs are evaluated in their reactions toward strangers, loud or novel stimuli (patient care machines), angry voices, being patted in a vigorous or clumsy manner (patients with mobility issues) and how they interact to other animals.

The addition of pediatric facility dogs has increased coping, distraction and morale among the pediatric patients as well as assisted in rehabilitative progress and motivation. Daily, the dogs see an average of 25 patients. Annually, the program averages a total of 6,500 visits.

The pet therapy program is evaluated and regulated by The Joint Commission. The Joint Commission enterprise is a global driver of quality improvement and patient safety in health care. TGH Children's Hospital is also designated as a Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF International) accredited pediatric specialty program known for culturally sensitive, interdisciplinary, coordinated, and focused on outcomes.

Outpatient Rehabilitation Transitions to Ambulatory Services

TGH Outpatient Rehabilitation Services teams are now part of TGH Ambulatory Services, working under the direction of Elan Melamed, Senior Director of Ambulatory Experience and Operations. Outpatient Rehabilitation teams provide physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, audiology, and pain management services throughout the Tampa Bay area. TGH Outpatient Rehabilitation has six different locations: *(see box)*

TGH OP Rehab Brandon Healthplex

- Adult and Pediatric Rehab
- PT/OT/Speech
- Pelvic floor & Ortho/ Neuro specialties

TGH OP Rehab at Westshore

- Adult and Pediatric Rehab
- PT/OT/Speech, Audiology

TGH OP Rehab at S. Armenia

- Adult Rehab – Orthopedic, Burn, Hand Injuries
- PT/OT
- OT – Certified Hand Therapists

TGH OP Rehab at Healthpark Pediatrics

- Pediatrics Only
- PT/OT/Speech

TGH OP Rehab at Medical Village

- PT and Biofeedback
- Chronic Pain Management Specialty

TGH Outpatient Rehabilitation Services are led by Nita Kidiyoor and Laurie Dixon. Kidiyoor manages the Westshore, Brandon Healthplex, South Armenia, and Healthpark Pediatrics Outpatient Rehabilitation programs. Her team provides world-class physical, occupational, and speech therapy services to adults and pediatrics. Dixon manages Outpatient Rehabilitation at Medical Village. The team at Medical Village offers services in physical therapy and biofeedback therapy for the chronic pain population. The Medical Village team recognizes that the key to understanding chronic pain starts with understanding it. They use therapeutic education and exercise to empower patients to get back to their most important life activities. Their vision is to expand services to provide world-class care to a variety of diagnoses within the outpatient arena.

Kidiyoor and Dixon bring longevity at TGH. Kidiyoor has been at TGH for 26 years. She started her TGH career as a physical therapist in hospital-based rehab. She has been the Manager of Outpatient Rehab for 16 years. Dixon began her TGH career as an occupational therapist in 1991 and managed the Interdisciplinary Pain Management program until she moved out of state in 1994. Dixon returned to TGH in 1999 and has been leading the Pain Management and Headache program and the Rehab Medical Clinic for over 22 years. Dixon also manages the inpatient pediatric rehab therapy services.

When separately asked what they are most proud of, both Kidiyoor and Dixon raved about their teams. Dixon shared, “My greatest accomplishment is the privilege to develop and lead a superb team of professionals throughout my career at TGH. The Medical Village team prides itself on evidence-based practice, compassionate care, team-work and enhancing the patient experience.” Kidiyoor said she is most proud of her team and went on to say, “We have a strong OP Rehab team focused

on providing world-class care to all our customers. Team members are constantly challenging themselves to grow, stay current with evidenced-based care and add new programs to meet the needs of the community.”

In Their Own Words

Gratitude from Outpatient Rehabilitation Patients

- “Each day, Megan asked me how I felt and if I had a complaint, she made adjustments to my routine.”
- “I received outpatient physical therapy services for over six months. It was a collaborative effort and all were responsive to my individual needs, requests, and questions.”
- “Jennifer and Heather, both SLPs, are top notch. Their skill, knowledge, and patient empathy is great!”
- “Steve W. is a fantastic physical therapist. He’s very knowledgeable and willing to try whatever may help my condition. He pushes me to exceed what I think I can do, and he’s usually right. This gives me more confidence in myself and definitely has helped my recovery.”
- “Jess is very compassionate. She is resourceful in finding ways to help me adapt to achieving daily activities.”
- “Marian is great!! She listens and has so much knowledge. Very present when treating you.”
- “I had a migraine at this appt. She turned down lights for me. I have limited vision and she kept me safe walking.”
- “Front desk girls are very friendly and helpful.”

NICU Mom Shows Gratitude to Pediatric Rehab Therapists and NICU Families

Kim Park and her husband had just moved to Wesley Chapel from Boston to start their family when complications surfaced halfway through Kim’s pregnancy. Preeclampsia and high blood pressure set in and heightened the risk for the Parks to deliver their son, Karter, early. The doctors said an emergency C-section was necessary. Little Karter Park entered the world on Jan. 15, 2020 – right before the pandemic began.

Karter was born at just 1 pound, 10 ounces and was transferred immediately to the Tampa General Hospital NICU. Kim could not hold her baby for 26 hours because she was sick, too, which made it extra stressful.

Throughout Karter’s time in the NICU, both parents were there for him every day throughout his challenging medical journey. At the same time, Kim was recovering from her own medical issues.

But the support of the NICU nurses and pediatric rehab therapy team, in particular OT/CNT Diane Allen, PT Lauren Wendel, and SLP/CNT Suzanne Schneider, made it much better.

The nurses and lactation specialists encouraged Kim to pump breast milk, which provides so many positive benefits. Kim said they were a “Godsend and very

helpful.” “The whole NICU team feels like family now,” she added.

Recently, the Parks ushered in twins at TGH, who did not need to go the NICU as their son did.

The family is so appreciative for the great care they received that they have donated natural, non-toxic products like lotion and lip balm and shampoo, as well as blankets and premie clothes.

She plans to donate to the NICU periodically because of the life-changing experience and superior support she received during both deliveries of her children.

“The Rehab staff gave us the tools to go home and continue our son’s therapy,” said Kim. “And hopefully, these efforts will help spread awareness of prematurity, the NICU, and our journey!”



Kim Park, grateful NICU Mom of Karter Park, along with the entire family

Wheelchair-bound Rehab Patients Enjoy a Sail Aboard the Impossible Dream

On a beautiful day in March, a group of about a dozen Tampa General patients set sail on the Impossible Dream from the Tampa Convention Center. The Impossible Dream is a 60-foot, universally designed, wheelchair-accessible catamaran that offers sails to people with disabilities, many of whom have never experienced the joy of being out on the water.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience for some led to discussion of the Rehab team working with the City of Tampa to improve accessibility on the docks throughout Tampa, particularly for the water taxi. It is a project the city has already been working on and the members of the Impossible Dream have worked with other cities to be more inclusive. TGH is also looking into options to support the Impossible Dream being in Tampa for a few weeks each winter, to continue to provide accessible access to the water.



About the Impossible Dream

Operating since 2013, the non-profit Impossible Dream sails up and down the U.S. East Coast and Canada, providing barrier-free sailing experiences to more than 1,000 people with disabilities and their loved ones just last year. Former President George H.W. Bush is among those who have boarded the Impossible Dream to experience wheelchair-accessible sailing. There is no charge for sailing on Impossible Dream as she is funded entirely by donations from individuals and corporations. Kudos to Jamie Dietrich, Physical Therapist, OP Rehab and Kim Christine, Administrator, Community Health and Wellness for working with the Impossible Dream and the City of Tampa to make this possible.

Young Boy's Language Skills Improves Dramatically Thanks to TGH Outpatient Rehab

Five year-old Moksh was diagnosed with bilateral profound hearing loss at birth. He received his first cochlear implant when he was just 16 months old, and his second cochlear implant a year later.

A cochlear implant is a small electronic device that electrically stimulates the cochlear nerve (the nerve for hearing). The implant has external and internal parts. The external part sits behind the ear. It picks up sounds with a microphone. It then processes the sound and transmits it to the internal part of the implant.

After the surgery, his biggest challenge was to train his brain to learn to listen, understand sounds, and process the sound signal given by the cochlear implants. After that, he needed to develop the understanding of the spoken language.

For the last three years, Moksh has been given speech-language therapy at TGH, which focuses on facilitating the development of spoken language. This specific therapy is also known as Auditory Verbal Therapy (AVT). AVT facilitates optimal acquisition of spoken language through listening. It promotes early diagnosis, one-on-one therapy, and state-of-the-art audiologic management and technology. Patients and caregivers actively participate in the therapy.

Speech-language pathologist Denyse Sierra Peguero said she has been working with Moksh since he was 8 months old and has been closely involved with his hearing journey. She said, "it has been an amazing and rewarding experience to see how cochlear implants have changed his life." She is pleased with the success he has achieved. "He is a wonderful 5-year-old who enjoys going to school, singing, dancing, playing, reading and interacting with others."

The professional care Moksh has received through ENT, audiology, and speech therapy, as well as his family support, has given this vibrant boy the opportunity to develop two spoken languages – English and Gujarati.

His mother, Rina Patel, said Moksh can't wait for his weekly Friday therapy sessions, even though it means a two-hour round trip from Auburndale. "All the therapists are very nice and my son loves it there," she said. "He knocks on Miss Nita's door to say hello every time. And the best part is that his speech has improved 100 percent!"



Moksh Patel



Moksh Patel and SLP Denyse Sierra Peguero

Naples girl makes great strides after brain tumor

It was an unsettling time last summer, when six year old Sawyer Nemitz of Naples was experiencing bad headaches, throwing up, and difficulty standing and balancing. Her parents, Melissa and Jordan, quickly had her assessed, and it was determined that Sawyer had a pilocytic astrocytoma brain tumor. Surgery was necessary and she had an immediate resection to remove the tumor. Post surgery she developed a rare condition called posterior fossa syndrome. It's a condition that occurs when the cerebellum is agitated during a resection of a tumor in the posterior fossa, which affects speech, sitting up, walking, and general motor skills.

Two weeks post-surgery, she was transferred to TGH Inpatient Rehab for her care where her parents believe the rigorous therapy sessions were key to her recovery.

They say it's important to get the best team around you, and that's who they found in the TGH pediatric inpatient therapy team. Sawyer spent four weeks in inpatient therapy at Tampa General. "They were just wonderful," Melissa said.

It has been one of the hardest times the family has ever been through, but Melissa says the most important thing was to stay together and strong as a family unit. And they believe as a parent you have to be your child's voice, advocate and cheerleader. Melissa and Jordan say that the TGH pediatric therapy team "couldn't have been more supportive and important" in their child's medical journey.

Today, Sawyer is not quite walking on her own yet, but has made tremendous strides. She is currently in school, loving anything art and drawing, and loves to play with her twin sister. The family is grateful for the achievements she made thanks to capable hands of the TGH pediatric inpatient rehab team.



PT Lauren Wendel, pictured here in a therapy session with Sawyer says, "Sawyer's positive attitude, infectious smile and hard work ethic made her a pleasure to work with in all of her therapies. She made tremendous progress throughout her inpatient rehab stay - a true testament to her hard work, resiliency and support from her family."

About Tampa General Hospital Rehabilitation Services

Rehabilitation Services at Tampa General Hospital is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for the following:

- Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation – Adult and Pediatric Rehabilitation Patients
- Rehabilitation Services is also designated by the Florida Department of Health as a provider of services to both adult and pediatric Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP) patients. Our services are accredited by The Joint Commission, and TGH is proud to be a Magnet hospital.

In addition to inpatient programs, the continuum



of care includes services provided by hospital-based rehabilitation therapists, outpatient rehabilitation services, and physician services for new and follow-up patients in the Rehabilitation Medical Clinics.

RehabMatters

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