

Rehabilitation 2015

.....and beyond

What does rehabilitation mean to the NHS and our patients?

To Karen, who suffered a devastating spinal injury after a mountaineering accident, it was being given the tools to train to become a Paralympic athlete, and re-engage once more with the outdoor life that she loved. For Penny who also experienced a high level spinal injury, it means using her personal health budget to invest in carers who gave her the support to bring up her son as a single mum; and in Physiotherapy sessions to reduce her incapacitating muscle spasms and the medication she needed to control them, stopping her constant admissions to hospital.

It means the elderly lady with a range of co-morbidities gets to stay in the family home she has lived in for 50 years, the child with cerebral palsy can run around with his mates at school, the middle aged bus driver can get back to work and support his family following treatment for cancer, and for carers and families it means they can have the confidence that their loved one is safe, and can continue to engage with life in a meaningful way.

As a Physiotherapist and a Rehabilitation professional, to me it is the golden thread that runs through every health and social care pathway, across all clinical specialities, all settings and all patient groups. It is not just a sequel to the main event or a bonus extra, it is quite simply the plot that sets up the story, establishes the characters, and takes the patient through the denouement to the conclusion of that story.

Rehabilitation is also a very personal journey for each patient. It is an approach that puts the patients' needs and desires at its very centre. It prevents patients with COPD being admitted to

hospital, it prepares patients for elective surgery, enables a quicker recovery and return to function, and considers the inextricable link between the physical and the psychological processes in response to chronic pain. It also restores and maintains mobility, movement and everyday functions following devastating brain injury, and supports patients and families at the end of life, helping to ease distressing and disabling symptoms.

Rehabilitation has a place in everything we do in the NHS, not just because it is at the root of quality care, but because it is cost effective and has significant socio-economic benefits. Patients who receive effective rehabilitation have shorter lengths of stay in hospital, avoid preventable admissions, have more chance of staying at home with simple packages of care, get back to work quicker and therefore reduce the financial burden to the state and increase tax revenues, can manage their long term conditions, keeping them in work, reducing their use and therefore the cost of medication.

So I come back to my original question- what does rehabilitation mean to the NHS and our patients? Quite simply it means an approach which prevents, prepares, enables and supports patients to live their life, throughout their life, and one which cannot be ignored when faced with continuing clinical and financial challenges.

Rehabilitation - we can't do without it!

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