

Co treating in Physical Rehab

by Jeffery McCormack

In this day of recreation therapy in physical rehab you have to adjust. You have to adjust to the fact that physical, occupational and speech therapy are the ones that count. That's not to say recreation therapy is not important or needed in the physical rehab setting. It just means facilities do not get paid for our services. However, they also do not get paid for psychology services as well. They don't get paid for nursing either! Can you imagine a person's life gets turned upside down and insurance does not think it is important enough to pay for psychology services?

As recreation therapist we need to find our niche. We need to find a way to be relevant but not interfere with the three hours of therapy all patients need to get in a day in order for insurance to pay for the day of therapy. The best way I accomplish this is by co treating. Working on goals needed in all therapies with a leisure spin on it.

Trust me, there is nothing more frustrating then getting an activity all set up, collecting patients to take part in the activity you just spent 15 minutes setting up, traveling to another floor for a bigger room, asking nurses, volunteers or anyone else who will help transport, then out of no where comes a physical therapist telling you a story about how the schedule had to get changed at the last minute and there is nothing that can be done. And poof your patient is gone and your activity is spoiled.

So to save myself a career of frustration and having a huge chip on my shoulder, I have found that 99.9% of physical, occupational and speech therapist are more than happy to co treat. In fact, a lot would rather. We as recreation therapist bring a realistic dimension to the rehab process. We give a purpose to work on memory, attention, balance, endurance, etc.... Most individuals going through rehab would most likely enjoy standing and repotting a plant then standing in front of a mirror in a gym setting. Don't get me wrong; there are definitely times when co treating is not an option due to the nature of the activity or family instruction, etc. However quite a bit of goals can be accomplished using recreational activities as a modality.

To use ammunition to educate the "three hours rule therapist's" think of all the different goals we as recreation therapist work on while playing cards, Scattogories or Yatzhee. Think of how we can modify our activity to help accomplish the goals need for a person to go home. Taking part in leisure activities at the standing level is a great way to get physical therapy to buy into the notion of co treating. Or, emphasizing a patient to utilize a weaker hand while playing cards to incorporate occupational therapy into your recreational therapy session. Speech therapist love word games. Try Scattogories, Taboo or Quiddler to work on word finding skills as well as various other cognitive goals.

So don't be discouraged when your plans for a treatment session don't work out because of a scheduling conflict with other therapies. Try to co treat and see how much smoother your day may go.