Therapy program uses music to meet rehab goals

Craig Hospital boasts many unique therapy options, but only one that uses Bieber, the Beatles and Beethoven to meet rehabilitation goals. The donor-funded Music Therapy program, under the direction of Sarah Thompson, uses the neuroscience of music to help individuals with spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries make clinical strides in areas ranging from breath control to regulation of attention and gait patterns.

“We know so much about how the brain and body respond to rhythm, melody, and harmony,” says Thompson. “Music is so flexible; we are able to use it to our advantage to meet needs of our patients.”

Craig’s Music Therapy program started in 2010 as a pilot project with five patients and transitioned to a full program in 2011. Patients are referred to Thompson by their doctor, and she works as part of the patient’s therapy team to determine what skills need to be developed. She meets with patients up to three times a week for one-half to one hour one-on-one sessions. Thompson designs the activities for each individual. A session might involve reaching for a tambourine or playing a drum to get an arm moving, singing exercises to help with breath control and projection, or walking in time with the rhythm of an autoharp. She uses the individual’s preferred style of music.

“One day I’ll play Rihanna for one patient, then switch to Frank Sinatra for another,” she says. “When I bring in music that they enjoy, they engage and really focus on what we’re doing.”

Elias Marmon, who received a TBI and SCI in a work-related accident, has been playing percussion instruments to work on his attention, his ability to block out distractions and remember instructions.

“He might be playing and stopping with me, listening for certain sounds, and ignoring other sounds. We use the instruments as a way for him to show me that he is paying attention, which is a baseline skill for learning, memory and decision making” says Thompson. She says that the music gets Marmon into a more positive and focused mindset to work on these challenging tasks. “Music therapy is something I really enjoy,” says Marmon. “It’s very soothing and it’s a big part of my therapy.”

Thompson sees patients with all levels of previous musical ability. Her favorite thing is seeing patients who are hesitant or skeptical begin to understand how this therapy can help them.

“I’m not trying to turn them into musicians,” she says. “It’s all about using the modality of music to help patients walk, talk, and return to the very best life possible.”
Research study looks at aging in spinal cord injury population

The Craig Hospital Research Department conducts a wide variety of applied Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) and Traumatic Brain Injury rehabilitation research, often collaborating with other institutions by leading and participating in multi-center research. One such ongoing project, the U.K. SCI Aging Study, is partially funded through donations to the Craig Hospital Foundation.

The study aims to understand the changes spinal cord injury survivors undergo throughout their lives. These changes often manifest themselves in ways which may adversely affect an individual’s function, both physically and in terms of community integration. According to study Principal Investigator Susan Charlifue, Ph.D., these secondary complications or secondary disabilities may be the result of chronic or newly-acquired medical problems, declining health status, changes in the support systems, or cumulative stresses caused by both the disability itself and the society in which the individual with a disability has to live.

Working with the National Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, and the Northwestern Spinal Injuries Centre in Southport, Merseyside, Craig has followed 282 individuals who, as of 1990, were all at least 20 years post-injury. Study participants participated in full physical examinations and detailed interviews regarding their medical history, health and functional status, as well as a series of psychosocial questionnaires. Subsequent data collection with this group of individuals occurred in 1993, 1996, 1999, 2002 and 2006 and 2010.

The results of this study have been presented around the world, and it is considered to be landmark achievement in bettering the understanding of the natural course of aging with SCI. Also, as a result of the early analyses of study data, a series of consumer-oriented brochures were developed at Craig Hospital. Additional longitudinal analyses of these data are ongoing, and Charlifue anticipates several publications and presentations will develop from this continued work.

Donor Profile: Barbara A. Duff

Barbara A. Duff’s life changed in 2001 when her car was hit head-on by a drunk driver. The Denver attorney suffered a traumatic brain injury, multiple broken bones and a ruptured diaphragm.

“One of my first memories after the accident was waking up at Craig. My sister was sitting next to my bed and there were flowers everywhere,” Duff says. “I thought I was at my funeral.” Over the three months she spent at Craig as an inpatient, she came to understand the severity of her injury and accept the reality of her new life.

“My brain worked differently than it had before, I couldn’t remember court cases like I used to, and it took me longer to process things,” she says. “But Craig gave me the chance to live a different life than what I’d known, and they helped my family understand how the injury had changed me.”

Through the donor-funded community reintegration program and the outpatient driving program, Duff learned and practiced skills that allowed her to return to work at her law firm just six months after her accident. She has since retired, and returns to Craig several times a week to work out in the PEAK Center.

In 2005, Duff decided to include Craig in her estate plans through the Foundation’s planned giving program, designating Craig as a small percentage beneficiary of her estate.

“Craig does wonderful things for wonderful people, but they need support to keep it going,” she says. “I view it as a contribution to the greater Craig Family, and it makes me feel good to know that I am able to leave a legacy.”

Graduate knits to give back

Ashley Brotherton suffered a traumatic brain injury when she was hit by a drunk driver while walking home from a concert. While she was rehabilitating at Craig Hospital, her Occupational Therapist taught her how to knit as a form of fine motor therapy. Brotherton recently started “For the Fun of Knit” an online shop on Etsy.com selling handmade knitted beanies.

“Knitting is great therapy for me,” Brotherton says. “It helps me practice fine motor skills as my hands get to practice coordinating with each other. It also helps me remember tasks as I must remember the current stitch I am working on as well as parts of the pattern for whatever I am creating.”

She plans to donate 10 percent of her sales to the Craig Hospital Foundation to help future Craig patients.

“Craig helped me get back up when I was at my lowest of lows,” says Brotherton. “I owe them so much and I know there’s no way I could possibly pay them back for everything they have done for me. I know it’s not much, but knowing that those donations have the potential to help current and future patients at Craig brings me so much happiness.”

Visit her shop at https://www.etsy.com/shop/forthefunofknit.

Foundation News

Colorado Gives Day nets more than $150,000 for Craig Hospital

The Craig Hospital Foundation raised $148,015 in just 24 hours on Colorado Gives Day, Tuesday, Dec. 10. Presented by Community First Foundation and FirstBank, Colorado Gives Day is a one-day campaign encouraging people to “give where they live” by making online donations to the hundreds of charities featured on ColoradoGives.org.

The amount in 2013 raised is a 601% increase over the previous year’s $21,420 total. Additionally, The Community First Foundation and FirstBank provided Craig a $1,462 “boost” from the FirstBank Foundation Incentive Fund and a $5,000 prize for drastically increasing the number of donations received over 2012. All funds will go to support Craig Hospital patients and programs.

In addition, fourteen Englewood-area restaurants donated a portion of their day’s sales to Craig Hospital’s Therapeutic Recreation department on Dec. 10, raising an additional $4,108 as of press time.

Redefining ROI: The Campaign for Craig Hospital update

As of December 31, 2013, $34.4 million of the $50 million goal has been raised for the Renovation and Expansion Capital Project and $13 million of the $18 million goal has been raised for Craig Hospital Programs and Unrestricted funds.