Grant from Xcel Energy provides assistance for Community Reintegration Program

Craig Hospital video named Colorado Hospital Project of the Year

At the 2014 Colorado Healthcare Communicators Gold Leaf Awards, the Craig Hospital Foundation and Craig’s Marketing and Media Services team won the Colorado Hospital Project of the Year title and a Gold Leaf Award for the PUSH Dinner Highlight Video. The video tells the story of Kevin Pearce, a former professional snowboarder and traumatic brain injury survivor, who was awarded the Christopher and Dana Reeve Inspiration Award at the 2014 Craig Hospital PUSH Dinner.

A former employee back into the work environment and on accommodations that will allow the employee to be successful. Once the patient has returned to work, the CR staff visits the patient at the worksite to ensure things are going well, slowly tapering off as the patient and employer begins to feel more comfortable.

When a patient cannot return to a job after injury or were previously unemployed, the CR team helps with career exploration, interest testing and assistance with returning or applying to a university or trade school. The CR staff also connects the patient to resources provided by the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), one of the CR program’s most significant collaborative partners. However, due to a budget crisis, DVR is unable to fund Craig as it has in the past.

“Many insurance companies do not offer fund-vocational services and so much of what we do is dependent on state funding,” says Tiffany Heck, Community Reintegration supervisor. “As our DVR resources are currently limited, we have to look for other funding sources—grants like the recent award from Xcel Energy will be essential to helping this program survive.”

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact Jordan Ames at james@craighospital.org or (303) 789-8108.
Redefining ROI: The Campaign for Craig Hospital

Now that the addition to the west building has opened, attention has turned to completely renovating the original west building. The Craig Hospital Foundation continues to raise funds for this phase of the project. As of September 8, 2014, $37 million of the $50 million goal has been raised for the capital project. More than $18.6 million of the $18 million goal has been raised for Craig Hospital unrestricted funds and programs like Therapeutic-Recreational, Community Reintegration, the Nurse Advice Line, Patient and Family Housing and more.

When the project is complete, all Craig Hospital patient rooms will be private. The new rooms have:

- Dedicated family areas
- Large private bathrooms with showers
- Large windows to allow plenty of natural sunlight.
- Higher ceilings for better and more strategically placed patient lift tracks, which allow patient to be transferred from the bed to the bathroom
- Charging stations for power wheelchairs
- More privacy for family interactions and consultations with physicians and therapists
- Full environmental controls for each patient room
- Adaptive stimulus environments for patients

Reinhard says that patient feedback on the new rooms has been very positive. "The rooms promote a healing environment for patients and families, as well as provide a space for our staff to work at their highest potential," she says.

Jennifer Biggs Arnold, associate chief nursing officer, also heard positive feedback from the patients that moved into the new rooms. "Everyone knew the new rooms were coming, but they were very pleasantly surprised," she says. "They were so pleased with the private bathrooms, the views, and the brightness of the new units.

The Craig Hospital Foundation is currently soliciting donors to underwrite these new rooms. For a gift of $100 to the Redefining ROI Campaign, the donor may name the room, or choose to honor a friend or loved one naming the room. These gifts can be paid over several years and may entitle the donor to a 25% Colorado state tax credit.

Studies look at Autonomic Dysreflexia treatment and healthcare provider education

Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD) is a potentially life-threatening condition that can occur in individuals with a spinal cord injury at the sixth thoracic (T6) vertebra level and above. Despite its relatively common occurrence among individuals with spinal cord injury, the use of medications for treatment of this condition has not been well studied. Currently, there is no commonly-accepted standard of care and many healthcare providers, including emergency healthcare providers, are not familiar with AD. Jenn Wahl, the staff development and research coordinator at Craig Hospital, is currently working on an inpatient research study and external research study both focused on management and treatment of AD.

AD is an abnormal response which occurs when the body is experiencing pain or discomfort below the level of the spinal cord injury. Because the pain or discomfort message does not get relayed to the brain due to injury to the spinal cord, the body’s autonomic nervous system responds with overactivity, creating dangerously high blood pressure. If the cause of pain or discomfort is not identified and treated immediately, serious complications such as stroke, seizure, organ damage, or potentially even death may occur. Up to 70 to 80 percent of individuals with spinal cord injury T6 and above have experienced one or more instances of AD.

Currently, only clinical consensus/expert opinion exists regarding the use of medications to treat AD, the medication chosen depends upon the provider. Nitro-Bid® has long been Craig’s standard medicinal treatment option. This topical ointment rapidly lowers blood pressure to a safer level allowing the practitioner to lower the dosage of Nitro-Bid®. Once it is removed, the intervention is stopped, decreasing the risk of extremely low blood pressure. This is important as persons with spinal cord injuries tend to run a lower than average resting blood pressure. It was discovered when doing this inpatient study that other rehabilitation facilities use medications such as beta blockers, which can lower a person’s blood pressure even further and cannot be removed from the system like Nitro-Bid® can.

"At Craig Hospital we have used Nitro-Bid® for over twenty years to treat AD and we believe this is the medication of choice to treat it," says Wahl. "I was surprised when re-reading medication uses for treatment of AD that other centers did not use this medication." Under the direction of Wahl and co-investigators Dr. William Scaza and Susan Charlifue, Ph.D., the study seeks to enroll 200 Craig inpatients. The investigators will compare treatment efficacy of Nitro-Bid® 2% topical ointment based on the location of ointment application, with two comparison treatments: nitroglycerin using Nitro-Bid®, to the forehead area, the other group receiving Nitro-Bid® to the chest area. Through study outcomes, the team will establish preferential placement of Nitro-Bid® and will provide clinical data regarding its use.

“Our goal is to produce literature showing that Nitro-Bid® 2% topical ointment is the medication of choice to enhance patient outcomes using proper treatment modalities,” says Wahl.

The study is being funded by the Craig Hospital Foundation through a gift from the Keith Shereda Foundation.

Additionally, Wahl is conducting a study, Enhancing Knowledge Regarding Autonomic Dysreflexia: A First Responder’s First Response as part of her doctoral work. Wahl will study the effects of an educational presentation on the knowledge enhancement for emergency care providers regarding the recognition and treatment of AD.

“Many people with spinal cord injuries who are not for AD, are able to identify its occurrence, signs and symptoms and potential management, yet emergency responders may not immediately recognize, Craig’s suggestions,” says Wahl. "Though this study, I hope to enhance knowledge among emergency care personnel regarding AD and its treatment.”