



The following excerpt has been taken from the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation Paralysis Resource Center website.

http://www.christopherreeve.org/site/c.mtKZKgMWKwG/b.4453457/k.A4CB/OverviewHow_to_Pick_a_Rehab.htm

Rehabilitation and Choosing a Rehab Center

How do you choose the right rehab setting once you or your loved one is past the very early or acute phase of paralysis or disease? While the nearest facility may be the most convenient, and may offer many advantages in terms of support from family and friends, it may not offer the level of service needed in a complex injury or disease.

Some questions to consider: Does the facility have experience with the particular diagnosis or condition? Usually the more patients a facility treats, the higher the expertise level of the staff. Is the place accredited – that is, does it meet professional standards of care for your specific needs?

Generally speaking, a facility with accredited expertise is preferable to a general rehabilitation program. For example, accreditation by the Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission (CARF) for spinal cord injury indicates that the facility meets a minimum standard level of care. Programs seek CARF accreditation when they feel their programs are exceptional.

CARF promotes outcomes-driven, value-based services for people with disabilities due to disease or injury. CARF accreditation is important for both privately and publicly financed rehabilitation care.

Another aspect of good rehab is the breadth and quality of the professional staff on hand.

Among the professions you can expect to find on a rehabilitation team:

Physiatrist

A physiatrist (fizz-ee-AT-trist, or more commonly pronounced fizz-EYE-a-trist) is a doctor specializing in physical medicine and rehabilitation. Physiatrists treat a wide range of problems from sore shoulders to spinal cord injuries. They treat acute and chronic pain

and musculoskeletal disorders. They may see a person with back pain, an athlete who sprains an ankle or a typist who has carpal tunnel syndrome.

Physiatrists coordinate the long-term rehabilitation process for patients with spinal cord injuries, cancer, stroke or other neurological disorders, brain injuries, amputations and multiple sclerosis.

A physiatrist must complete four years of graduate medical education and four years of postdoctoral residency training. Residency includes one year spent developing fundamental clinical skills and three years of training in the full scope of the specialty.

Rehab Nurse

Nurses with special training in rehabilitative and restorative principles work collaboratively with the rest of the rehabilitation team to solve problems and manage complex medical issues. Rehabilitation nurses are experts in bladder, bowel, nutrition, pain, skin integrity, breathing, self care, coordination of medical regimens and related issues. They provide ongoing patient and family education, set goals for maximal independence and establish plans of care to maintain optimal wellness.

Rehabilitation nurses begin to work with individuals and their families soon after the onset of a disabling injury or chronic illness and they continue to provide support after return to home, work or school. According to the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses, "rehabilitation nursing" is a philosophy of care, not a work setting or phase of treatment. Rehabilitation nurses take a holistic approach to meeting patients' medical, vocational, educational, environmental and spiritual needs.

Occupational Therapy

An occupational therapist (OT) is skilled in helping individuals learn, or relearn, the day-to-day activities they need to achieve maximum independence. OTs offer treatment programs to help with bathing, dressing, preparing a meal, house cleaning, engaging in arts and crafts or gardening. They make recommendations and offer training in the use of adaptive equipment to replace lost function.

OTs also evaluate home and job environments and make recommendations for adaptations. The occupational therapist also guides family members and caregivers in safe and effective methods of caring for people. Occupational therapy not only helps to restore basic physical skills, but also facilitates contact with the community outside of the hospital.

Physical Therapy

The physical therapists (PT) treat disabilities that result from motor and sensory impairments. Their aim is to help people increase strength and endurance, improve

coordination, reduce spasticity, maintain muscles in paralyzed limbs, protect skin from pressure sores and gain greater control over bladder and bowel function.

PTs also teach paralyzed people techniques for using assistive devices such as wheelchairs, canes or braces. In addition to "hands-on" exercises and treatments, physical therapists also educate people to take care of themselves. PTs may also work with joints and assure their range of motion. Physical therapists also use methods such as ultrasound (which uses high frequency waves to produce heat), hot packs and ice.

Other therapists you should find on the rehab unit include:

Recreation therapists help people discover the wide range of recreation options available in their community.

Vocational therapists help people assess their job skills and to work with the state Vocational Rehab or other agencies to obtain equipment, training and placement.

Many rehab facilities have seating and positioning experts to help people select the best wheelchair, cushion and positioning gear.

Most facilities have rehab psychologists to assist people with the often-dramatic life changes that follow disease or trauma.

Sex and family counseling are integral to most rehab programs, in order to help patients better understand sexual function, family planning, etc.

Sources: American Occupational Therapy Association, American Physical Therapy Association, American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission, Association of Rehabilitation Nurses

Websites for Choosing a Facility

www.carf.org

Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)

4891 E. Grant Road

Tucson, AZ 85712

(520) 325-1044 or toll-free (888) 281-6531 voice/TTY

(520) 318-1129 fax

Email: medical@carf.org for Medical Rehabilitation

CARF is an independent, not-for-profit accrediting body promoting quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process that centers on enhancing the lives of the persons receiving services. Founded in 1966 as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, the accrediting body is now

known as CARF. CARF establishes customer-focused standards to help providers measure and improve the quality, value, and outcomes of their services. At present, CARF has accredited more than 3,500 organizations in the United States, Canada, and Sweden in the areas of Adult Day Services, Assisted Living, Behavioral Health, Employment and Community Services, and Medical Rehabilitation. CARF develops and maintains practical and relevant standards of quality for such programs.

To locate an accredited rehabilitation facility near you contact CARF. They have information on rehab facilities accredited in spinal cord injury, brain injury, pain management. The CARF website has a provider search tool, where you can look for rehab programs by state. You can find it at <http://carf.org/advancedProviderSearch.aspx> At the “Program” dropdown box, you can pick “Spinal Cord System of Care” or “Brain Injury” or “Interdisciplinary Pain”, etc.

<http://www.carf.org/Programs/CARFCanada/>

CARF Canada

10665 Jasper Avenue, Suite 1400A
Edmonton, AB T5J 3S9, Canada
(780) 429-2538 voice
(780) 426-7274 fax

<http://www.naric.com/research/pd/results.cfm?type=type&display=detailed&criteria=Spinal%20Cord%20Injury%20Model%20Systems>

National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research (NCDDR) funds 14 Model Spinal Cord Injury Facilities in the U.S.

Model SCI Centers across the United States work together to demonstrate improved care, maintain a national database, participate in independent and collaborative research, and provide continuing education relating to spinal cord injury. Projects are currently located in the following states: Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

<http://www.msktc.org/>

http://msktc.washington.edu/sci/sci_model_systems.htm

Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center

Lists the 14 model SCI centers in the U.S.

<http://www.spinalcord.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=104757>

University of Alabama at Birmingham: SCI Model Systems 2011-2016

Lists the 14 model SCI centers in the U.S.

<http://www.newenglandrehab.com/pdf/whattolookfor08.pdf>

New England Rehabilitation Hospital: What to Look for in a Rehabilitation Facility

Web Sites on Rehab

www.aapmr.org/

The American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

The national medical society for more than 6,400 physicians who are specialists in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation (physiatrists). Web site includes a physician directory by state.

www.apta.org/

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)

The main membership organization for the PT profession, furthering the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of movement dysfunctions.

www.aota.org/

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)

Advances the field of occupational therapy through standard-setting, advocacy, education, and research.

www.acrm.org/

The American Congress of Rehabilitation

Serves people with disabling conditions by promoting rehabilitation research and the transfer of technology.

www.rehabnurse.org/

Association of Rehabilitation Nurses

Promotes and accredits rehab nurses and promotes the philosophy of care of the nursing professional.

<http://calder.med.miami.edu/pointis/>

RehabTeamSite / PoinTIS

PoinTIS (Point of Care, Teambased Information System) is a web site that provides comprehensive information on spinal cord injury rehabilitation and traumatic brain injury rehabilitation for health care providers, patients and patients families. They are readily accessible at the point-of-care and along the entire continuum of patient care. PoinTIS provides access to a tutorial, handbooks and literature searches.

<http://www.nationalrehab.org>

National Rehabilitation Association (NRA)

Not long after Congress passed the National Rehabilitation Act of 1920, the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) began its commitment to persons with disabilities. As the oldest and strongest advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities, NRA's mission is to provide advocacy, awareness and career advancement for professionals in the fields of rehabilitation. Their members include rehab counselors, physical, speech and occupational therapists, job trainers, consultants, independent living instructors and other professionals involved in the advocacy of programs and services for people with disabilities.

For info on exercise based therapy and fitness centers for people with disabilities once the person is medically stable, please ask for the Reeve Fitness and Exercise factsheet.

The following books and videos are available for free loan from the PRC library. For more information, please see www.paralysis.org and click the Lending Library tab.

Books

Choosing a High-Quality Medical Rehabilitation Program: An NRH Field Guide for People with Disabilities. (book) National Rehabilitation Hospital, Medstar Research Institute, 2004. For copies call 1-866-380-4344.

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