



The Madonna Minute

A briefing about the programs and innovations at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital

MAY 2011

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Stroke Rising Among Young Adults: Implications for Stroke Rehabilitation

Stroke can affect anyone at any age. Stroke is the fourth leading cause of death and the leading cause of serious, adult disability in the United States with approximately 795,000 strokes diagnosed each year. Studies show nearly 80 percent of all strokes are preventable, which is why it is vital to manage personal risk, adopt a healthy lifestyle and know how to recognize and respond to stroke signs and symptoms.³

May is National Stroke Awareness Month and with the rising incidence of stroke among young people, it is an ideal time to raise awareness on the importance of starting healthy lifestyle behaviors at a young age to decrease stroke and cardiovascular disease risk in older adulthood. New findings suggest that rising rates of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure among teenagers and young adults are likely contributing to an increased stroke risk in this age group. According to Dr. Ralph Sacco, neurologist and President of the American Heart/American Stroke Association (AHA/ASA) “if we are not able to help young adults understand the relevance of their actions now and their risk of stroke tomorrow, then we could be looking at an increase in stroke diagnoses and deaths within the next 10 to 20 years.”² By following a healthy lifestyle, people can reduce their risk of stroke by up to 80 percent according to the AHA/ASA’s new guidelines released in December 2010.

Approximately 25 percent of people who experience a stroke are



Sessions on the pediatric Lokomat®, a state-of-the-art robotic gait training device, helped Gabi relearn her walking skills that had been lost when the four-year-old suffered a stroke.

under the age of 65. Younger patients with stroke have rehabilitation goals related to parenting, working, driving, homemaking, leisure, exercise, and community involvement, in addition to mobility and self care. An intense, multi-disciplinary rehabilitation program that addresses each individual’s unique needs and goals is an essential component of the recovery process in this population. These patients also benefit from participation in educational sessions, group sessions and community outings. For both young adult and older adult patients who have specific work and

leisure interests, adaptive sports and recreational activities, in addition to work re-entry skills training, are necessary to achieve functional independence and resumption of life roles upon discharge.

Stroke is not just an adult disease. Cerebrovascular disorders, such as stroke are considered one of the top 10 causes of death in children. Current estimates show stroke occurs in one per 4,000 live births with incidence rates in children ranging from 1.3 to 13 per 100,000 children per year.¹ More than half of children and adolescents with stroke will develop life-long cognitive and motor disabilities and up to one-third will experience a recurrent stroke. Unfortunately, children with stroke are often either misdiagnosed or undiagnosed initially, which can affect the long-term outcome.

“Approximately 25 percent of people who experience a stroke are under the age of 65.”

Madonna’s Stroke Program is designed to meet the unique needs of children and adolescents ages 0-18, taking into account the impact of the stroke on developmental milestones throughout the child’s recovery. In addition to individualized therapy sessions, children and adolescents

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“Madonna’s Stroke Program is designed to meet the unique needs of children and adolescents ages 0-18...”

are encouraged to participate in recreational and therapeutic play activities, reinforcing skills learned in therapy. They also engage in school re-entry throughout their rehab stay to identify strategies which will be helpful to facilitate a successful transition back to school. Parents and family members are encouraged to be involved in the rehab process through education and participation in therapy sessions to learn how to care for their child with a stroke as well as how to continue to facilitate their recovery long after discharge.

Due to the complex nature of stroke and medical complications that can often occur, long-term follow up care is essential to assist patients along the road to recovery by helping to minimize the disabling effects of stroke. Madonna’s long-term follow up process includes a telephone screen six

months after discharge from the stroke program. In addition, an annual Stroke Comprehensive Assessment is available for stroke survivors in need of a more thorough evaluation by a multi-disciplinary team of stroke experts, including physiatry, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and neuropsychology. Since beginning this new follow-up process in November 2011, the long-term outcomes for patients who returned to the community after discharge have been very favorable with 91 percent of patients reporting maintenance of functional gains and 41 percent returning to work or school.

For more information on Madonna’s Stroke Program or the Stroke Comprehensive Assessment please contact Amy Goldman, PT, DPT at (402) 486-8620.

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