

Hospital Stay with Rehab Offers Healing Close to Home

As the silver tsunami hits, Baby Boomers are finding themselves getting their hips and knees replaced and planning other elective but necessary surgeries. A new approach to rehab following surgery offers boomers, injured athletes, and others another alternative for skilled nursing care and therapy outside of a nursing home. Patients are loving the option.

Someone who regularly hears that positive feedback is OSF HealthCare Saint Luke Inpatient Care Director Lisa Garcia. She says so called "swing bed" service allows hospitals, particularly those in rural areas, to use beds for rehabilitation when acute care is no longer needed.

It can be very helpful for a patient who no longer needs intense care but who isn't ready to go home. Garcia says a coordinated approach helps each patient reach their highest potential before they're released to go home.

"We help them by providing services they're going to need such as skilled occupational therapy, physical therapy. Some of those people require antibiotics afterwards so we give them IV therapy as well, wound care – any skilled services they might need before they can transition to home," she said.

Medicare and most private insurers cover extended care services furnished in a swing bed hospital but it does require a physician's order and insurance pre-certification. The staff at OSF HealthCare facilities can help with the screening process.

The in-hospital rehab is not only for patients who have had surgery. Garcia says it can help newly diagnosed diabetics who have had a blood-sugar related episode or older patients who have fallen and need to improve balance or to build up their strength.

She cites as an example, "Somebody who maybe has been in and out of the hospital or who has been home but not really being as active as they could be – that we can actually help get them back to their prior level and get them back home and independent."

The average length of stay for a swing bed patient is seven to 10 days, depending on the extent of therapy and sometimes education that is required.

Another advantage for an existing OSF HealthCare patient -- electronic records are in one system so care teams have the ability to review each patient's medical history so they can heal as quickly and safely as possible. However, Garcia points patients can also be admitted to the program from other, non-OSF HealthCare facilities.

But, Garcia stresses OSF HealthCare patients enjoy the swing bed program because they receive the same level of expert care they know and trust. Seventy-nine year old Paul Schauble had just that kind of experience.

"They talk about American exceptionalism ... I found that three miles away from my home, right here," he declared.

Schauble of Kewanee became a swing bed patient following an accident in which he was dragged 50 feet down his driveway by his own pick-up truck. Schauble was airlifted to OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center in Peoria and underwent surgery for multiple injuries.

Fifteen days later, Schauble was back at OSF Saint Luke Medical Center in Kewanee where he could receive therapy and recover close to home. He did have some pain and so he enjoyed the ability to stay in a private room and receive therapy from the hospital's inpatient therapy gym.

Schauble was comforted and felt secure seeing familiar faces every day.

"Familiarity to somebody that's really hurt bad means a lot. It does. It means a great lot," he said choking back tears. "Does it work? Yes it does ok? I'm living proof of that!"

Now fully recovered and doing well back at home, Schauble recently dropped by the hospital just to say hi to his care team which he credits with going above and beyond to heal him physically and to lift him emotionally when he needed it most.

Planning an elective surgery or wondering how you'll transition home following a hospital stay? Ask your provider or discharge planner if the OSF swing bed option is available and appropriate for you.

Swing Bed Programs are currently available at these OSF HealthCare Hospitals:

OSF Saint Luke Medical Center in Kewanee, Illinois

OSF Holy Family Medical Center in Monmouth, Illinois

OSF Saint Paul Medical Center in Mendota, Illinois

OSF Saint Francis Medical Center in Escanaba, Michigan