

## Reaping the Benefits of Rehab

### *Don't let the COVID-19 pandemic deter taking important step in recovery*

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Every spring, Laura Corpuz and her husband, Rick, return to the Philippines for a month to spend time with family. This year the COVID-19 pandemic, which was just taking hold around the world, stopped their planned March 1 departure. It's something her family will always be grateful for because ten days later Laura suffered a stroke while at work. She spent a month in the hospital, including a week in the intensive care unit.

"It was just a blessing that she did not go due to COVID, so our family is actually thankful for the COVID here and unknowingly that she would have a stroke but that kept her here. We think about it all the time, if she wasn't here how her progress would've been much slower," said Laura's daughter, Alona Dawson.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 800,000 people in the U.S. experience a stroke each year, with more than 31-percent of them receiving outpatient rehabilitation services to help them recover.

Since being discharged from the hospital in April, Laura, 77, has received outpatient rehabilitation through OSF HealthCare to relearn skills and strengthen her right side, which was affected by the stroke.

"When I first met her, Laura could barely move her arm, Laura loves knitting, she enjoys cooking - she couldn't do those, she could not care for herself, she could barely get out of her wheelchair," explained Anne Horowitz, OTR/L, CSRS, MSCS an occupational therapist with OSF HealthCare. "In order to recover from a stroke you need to have occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy in order to improve the symptoms whether it's an ability to move your arm to be able to feed yourself, or be able to dress yourself, or difficulty with standing and walking, or an ability to speak or swallow."

During the early days of the pandemic, people often did not seek out the care they needed – even for emergency situations like a stroke or heart attack – because they feared contracting COVID-19. Laura did seek care immediately, and was taken to the emergency department by ambulance, and her stroke still significantly affected her ability to care for herself. She continued the therapy she started in the hospital through outpatient rehabilitation as soon as she could.

Her neuro-therapist, Anne Horowitz, says that hasn't been the case with some of her patients. She sees a difference in those who don't stay on track with rehab – both physically and emotionally.

"They have regressed, they've gotten worse, they've been very inactive. And not only just from a physical standpoint but from a mental health standpoint, too. Depression - I've really talked to them about getting out and moving and communicating, enjoying things that they're doing."

Horowitz says she and the others who provide outpatient therapy services have always followed some of the practices implemented in the wake of COVID-19 to keep patients safe, including practicing good hand hygiene. The biggest change is now everyone wears a mask as well. But she hears from her patients all the time about the peace of mind they have when they come to therapy.

"It's so important to be practicing and doing everything that she's learning here consistently every single day. We haven't had any problems with the coronavirus and rehab and honestly when we come here, everything is safe everybody's in masks," according to Dawson.

"I'm moving and I'm walking and I trust the people here," added Laura.

Laura's progress has been so good, she'll soon be discharged from rehab services. She and her husband look forward to being able to travel again to the Philippines, once it is safe to do so. In the meantime, she'll continue to spend time with her three children and nine grandchildren, especially since they help her work on what she has learned during therapy.

Learn more about rehabilitation services offered through OSF HealthCare [here](#).