



SCI&D SPIRIT

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CATCH the SPIRIT

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VA Boston Healthcare System
Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders

A Pleasant Escape

George Gill is a retired commercial fisherman, who once fished the Atlantic from Boston Harbor to Virginia. He incurred a spinal cord injury when he fell from a ladder while painting his boat when it was in drydock. Mr. Gill has been a patient in the VA Boston Healthcare System's Spinal Cord Injury Program since his quadriplegic injury in 1996 and received comprehensive acute rehabilitation at the West Roxbury Division. For the past fifteen years, every May and December, he spends two weeks at the Brockton Division's SCI Unit for respite care.

Sandy Gill is her husband's caregiver with assistance from the VNA. She states that these respite care stays "give us both a break. He gets to catch up with all the guys at Brockton and I get to visit my daughters." Mr. Gill appreciates all the activities available at the Brockton SCI Unit. He enthusiastically lists what he participates in - pinball, pool, target practice, card parties, cribbage tournaments, computer training and shopping trips. "The list goes on and on. I might try bowling next time." He states that "There's a brand new gym now where I can see a therapist."

Mr. Gill and many other Veterans often have their SCI

Annual Evaluation during their respite care stay. Some find it less fatiguing to spread it out over several days. Many Veterans take the opportunity to get their wheelchairs repaired or review their equipment needs with a therapist during their respite care stay.



George Gill, enjoys a spring day during his respite stay on the Brockton Campus

VA SCI staff believe that the amount of support a caregiver has is crucial to maintaining the spinal cord injured Veteran in the community. In fact, the health and well-being of spinal cord injured Veterans is directly affected by caregiver stress. At VA Boston HCS, we offer care for the Veteran in a unit totally dedicated to spinal cord injury. The physicians, nurses, therapists and all other staff are experienced in the care of the Veteran with SCI. Our building, equipment and activities are designed to provide a comfortable respite stay for our Veterans.

The VA recognizes that respite care is an important consideration for families and caregivers of physically dependant Veterans and offers respite care to Veterans with SCI who need attendant care.

For respite care assistance contact:
Shirley Jackson, LICSW - Phone: 774-826-1809

Take Charge of Your Health

MyHealthVet is a free, online Personal Health Record, provided by the VA, that empowers Veterans to become partners in their health care. The website provides two online medical libraries where you can get health information, research a medical topic, and simply learn more about your health. You can record your allergies, immunizations, blood pressure, body weight and more. You can also print out your entire record for your next clinic visit.

Registration takes a few minutes and will provide access to all but your personal health information. In order to access your personal health information, you will need to complete In-Person Authentication (IPA) at your next SCI Clinic visit. IPA is an additional safety and security measure to verify a MyHealthVet user's identity. Once your IPA is complete you can access your DoD Military Service Information, get your VA Wellness Reminders, view your VA appointments and lab results, and participate in Secure Messaging with your primary health care team members (See separate article on page 2.)

I urge you to take charge of your health and log on today: www.myhealth.va.gov



Sunil Sabharwal, MD
Chief SCI/D Services

From Snow Covered Mountains...

During the week of January 9th , 2012, there were a lot of empty wheelchairs around the New England Handicapped Sports Association (NEHSA) Lodge at Mount Sunapee, NH. That is a good thing, as it meant that disabled skiers were out on the slopes!

Fifty seven disabled veterans, 20 family members and 5 service dogs took the hill for a week of healing, rehabilitation and fun. SCI staff members, Maura Nee, NP, Beth Tamaro, RN and Carol O'Connell, medical support assistant were three of the over 130 volunteers supporting and showing gratitude for our veterans' service and sacrifice.

Skiing brings the Veterans a feeling of independence and belonging. This clinic not only serves as physical rehabilitation for disabled Veterans but also as respite from day to day stress.

The New England Winter Sports Clinic (NEWSC) was developed by co-founders Ralph Marche and Tony Santilli in 1997 and has continued to grow for the past 15 years. Next year's clinic is scheduled for January 14-18, 2013.



Dustin Soroka, Veteran Volunteer
Tony Santilli, Veteran Co-founder of NEWSC

... To Fairways and Beaches

As we welcome spring, you may want to join some of the spring and summer activities taking place locally and nationally. Below is a list of some recreational events that are scheduled for this year:

Activity	Location	Date
Adaptive Kayak Clinics	VA Brockton Pool/Lake Nippenicket	Wednesdays 5:00-7:00pm
Hand Cycling Clinics	VA Brockton Campus	Mondays 4:00-6:30pm
Golf Clinics	Brookline, MA	Thursdays 2:00-3:00pm
Waves for the Braves Surf Clinics	Nantasket Beach, Hull, MA	TBA
32nd National Veteran's Wheelchair Games	Richmond, VA	June 25-30
New England Summer Sports Clinic	Mount Sunapee, NH	July 23-27
National Veteran's Summer Sports Clinic	San Diego, CA	September 16-21

For more information on the any of the above events please contact:
Kelly Cossaboom, Adaptive Sports Case Manager – Phone: 774-826-2036



Many of our Veterans with SCI have asked to be able to email their team when they have a non-urgent question. Secure messaging is now available for the SCI Program at VA Boston Healthcare System. It is a web-based message system that allows Veterans and VA Healthcare Teams to communicate non-urgent, health related information in a private and safe computer environment. Secure Messaging is not e-mail, but an *encrypted*, secure communication tool available through MyHealthVet.

You may access Secure Messaging 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on www.myhealth.va.gov. Secure Messaging is based on proven and widely accepted standards in the health care industry and

- Promotes a partnership between the patient and his or her health care team
- Provides a safe, alternative communication means that is convenient and flexible
- Reduces the need for telephone calls and waiting on hold
- Decreases the need for unscheduled clinic walk-in visits
- Provides a timely response

MyHealthVet users, who have an upgraded account known as an In-Person Authentication, or IPA, may use Secure Messaging. You can complete the IPA process at your next visit to the SCI Clinic. It will take approximately 10 minutes. The purpose of the one-time IPA process is to verify your identity, in-person. This complies with VA policy and protects Veterans' identities. Carol O'Connell in the SCI Clinic is available to help you.



Kudos to Two SCI Staff Nurses!

Annually, two nursing staff members who work in Spinal Cord Injury at the VA Boston Healthcare System receive the Pierik Award. It is a prestigious award given in recognition of the outstanding care provided to the spinal cord injured veterans. This year's award recipients are Tamie Reynolds, a Health Technician, on the long-term care SCI unit in Brockton and Marybeth Butler, a registered nurse, on the acute SCI unit in West Roxbury. This special recognition for Tamie and Marybeth's devotion, teamwork and professionalism is well deserved.



Tamie Reynolds, HT

Tamie has worked at the VA for 3.5 years. When asked to comment about her job, she replied, "It is totally different compared to my previous jobs. I am able to provide more hands-on care and continue to learn so much. I really enjoy working here".



Marybeth Butler, RN

Marybeth has worked at the VA for 21 years; three years as a nursing assistant and eighteen years as a registered nurse. When asked about working in SCI, she shared, "I consider myself lucky to be able to care for the veterans who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. This job can be challenging at times but it is also very rewarding".

Education Series Open to All SCI/D Veterans and Caregivers

A Patient Education Series is held every Thursday afternoon from 1pm - 2pm in the Day Room on Unit A2 at the West Roxbury Campus. Each session has a licensed professional who has advanced knowledge in the topic that allows both newer and older injured Veterans to discuss ongoing issues that affect an individual living with SCI/D. Both Veterans with SCI/D and Caregivers are welcomed to attend.

Topic	Presenter	Date	Topic	Presenter	Date
Adjustment	Jeanine Penzo, LICSW	3/01/2012	Equipment	Occupational Therapist Physical Therapist	4/05/2012
Homecare	Paula McCann, RN Sharrie Finn, RN	3/08/2012	Skin Care	Kelly Skinner, NP	4/12/2012
Sexuality	Maggie Budd, PhD	3/15/2012	Bowel/Bladder	Laurie Doherty, RN	4/19/2012
Infectious Disease	Ernie Robillard, RN	3/22/2012	Vocational Rehab	Ken Lipton, M.A., C.R.C.	4/26/2012
Pharmacy	Angela Corriera, Pharm. D.	3/29/2012	Medical Issues	Sunil Sabharwal, MD	5/03/2012
	Kathryn Dedominicis, Pharm. D.		Nutrition	Angela Ditucci, RD, LDN	5/10/2012

** These dates may be subject to change or cancellation, please call ahead to verify. Phone 857-203-6574**



RESPITE CARE, A LUXURY OR A NECESSITY?

Caregivers give 100% to their loved ones, making certain that all of their needs are met. However, most caregivers take better care of their loved ones than they do of themselves. They will admit that they have often neglected their own medical care, they cannot remember the last time they had uninterrupted sleep and they worry about their spouse, parent, or child whenever they have to leave the home. These are the very reasons that we encourage caregivers to utilize the VA respite services that are available to them. All caregivers need time to meet their own emotional and physical needs in order to "recharge their batteries". When they are healthy and more rested, our Veterans benefit as well, therefore taking advantage of inpatient or in home respite should be viewed as a necessity and NOT a luxury.

For caregiver assistance contact: Jeanine Penzo LICSW - Phone: 857-203-6498

For respite care assistance contact: Shirley Jackson, LICSW - Phone: 774-826-1809



VA Boston Healthcare System
 1400 VFW Parkway
 West Roxbury, MA 02132
 800-865-3384
<http://www.boston.va.gov>
 Facebook: VA Boston Healthcare System

Veteran Veteran
 1 Veteran Way
 Boston, MA 02122

A Day in the Life of an Acute Rehab Patient

People, who are not familiar with rehab, may think a patient in the hospital is stuck in bed with nothing to do but watch TV and wait for the next meal. Rehab patients, however, know that this is not the case. Acute rehab patients at VA Boston HCS work diligently for long hours to help themselves regain strength and function and to learn new ways to do the things that most people take for granted.

Many starting out and unfamiliar with the rehab environment , are confused about the difference between occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT).

The overall goal of PT is to maximize the person’s independence with functional mobility. This includes bed mobility, transfers in/ out of bed, wheelchair mobility, family and caregiver training, sitting balance, and possibly gait and stairs.

OT assists individuals with their occupations of everyday life. These include self care, work and leisure activities. Occupational Therapists assist people in living functional, successful, and independent lives.

In the end, all the Veterans in acute rehab work towards the same ultimate goal; to return to their friends, family and community.



A TYPICAL DAY ON A2 ACUTE REHAB	
6:00AM	Early Breakfast Tray
6:30 to 8:00AM	Morning Care with Nursing
8 :00 to 9:00AM	Occupational Therapy
10 :00 to 11:00AM	Pool Therapy or Speech Therapy
NOON to 1:00PM	Lunch Group in the Day Room with Recreational Therapist Trivia Contest
1:00 to 2:00PM	Tuesday: Psychology Educational Support Group Wednesday: Team Meeting with Patient/Family Thursday: Patient Education Series with SCI Staff member
2:00 to 3:00PM	Physical Therapy in Gym
3:00 to 4:00 PM	Monday, Wednesday, Friday: Supervised Open Gym for Eligible Rehab Patients
6:30PM	Wednesday: Community Outing with Recreational Therapy Movies, Dinner, Shopping, Adaptive Kayaking.