



## Setting a standard of service excellence

As early as 1957, Carolinas Rehabilitation has been recognized for providing excellent care. Howard Rusk, MD, founder of the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine, praised what is now Carolinas Rehabilitation as one of the finest rehabilitation facilities in the nation. As its programs continue to grow, Carolinas Rehabilitation hasn't lost sight of the need to continue offering excellent clinical and customer service and investing in its physicians and staff.

"The key to excellent patient satisfaction is our physicians and employees," says Robert Larrison, president of Carolinas Rehabilitation. "When you care for people who have suffered catastrophic, life-altering injuries, you have to be extremely sensitive and compassionate to patient and family needs. Our team is very gifted when it comes to providing the best clinical care and excellent customer service."

### IMPROVING SERVICE INITIATIVES

Each week, members of the rehabilitation team discuss lessons in service excellence and ways to reinforce their commitment to the Carolinas Rehabilitation family. As part of their dedication to service excellence, physicians and administra-

tors attend Carolinas HealthCare System's Leadership Development Institute, as well as conferences that focus on practicing excellence, such as the Studer Group's prestigious Physician Institute.

Carolin Rehabilitation has had four physicians attend this Institute. Most recently, Matt Shall, MD, and Vishwa Raj, MD, attended the Physician Institute in Atlanta to learn about best processes in customer and clinical service. Their primary focus was to determine which initiatives could be developed to further improve the overall experiences of patients, staff and physicians. Areas that were immediately affected included methods to develop more effective clinical care and techniques to facilitate further long-term planning to develop champions to promote service excellence and implement best practices to improve day-to-day operations.

"The Studer conference was very beneficial in learning strategies to

build and maintain a team-focused organization," says Dr. Shall.

### RAISING THE BAR

The goal at Carolinas Rehabilitation is not only to treat patients but also to provide a service to the community. With continued collaboration from clinicians and administration, Carolinas Rehabilitation strives to raise the bar for standards of excellence where kindness counts, teamwork wins and everybody makes a difference. ■



▲ Vu Nguyen, MD (left), and Jeff Wiggins, PA, check in with patient Donna McRae during a therapy session. From the day patients are admitted through discharge and beyond, Carolinas Rehabilitation physicians lead the way in service excellence.



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▲ Philip Yang undergoes one of his daily physical therapy sessions with Carolinas Rehabilitation physical therapist Katie Williams, while his wife, Debbie, learns techniques to care for Philip after discharge. Next page: Speech therapist Emily Clark, SLP, helps Philip with verbal expression activities.

# Mile by mile

How Philip Yang’s rehabilitation journey led to Carolinas Rehabilitation

Philip Yang sits in his wheelchair next to his wife, Debbie, waiting for his therapy session at Carolinas Rehabilitation to begin. Philip has covered many miles and milestones to reach this point.

In November 2008, Philip was in Shanghai for a business trip and purchased a vintage motorcycle to bring to the United States. Although he didn’t have a helmet, Philip decided to take a quick test drive. While driving through Shanghai, Philip was thrown from the motorcycle. Having suffered multi-traumatic injuries and in need of reconstructive surgery on his leg, he was immediately rushed to a hospital in Beijing. While in the hospital, Philip also suffered a stroke, leaving him with aphasia and weakness in his right side.

From Beijing, Philip was transferred to a hospital in Hong Kong, where he stayed for seven weeks. There, the Yangs were told Philip would need intense acute rehabilitative therapy, and they decided to return to the United States for his treatment. After conducting an Internet search, Debbie decided

Carolinas Rehabilitation would be the best place for Philip.

## MEETING CHALLENGES

Upon admission, Philip wasn’t walking and couldn’t sit in a wheelchair for longer than a few minutes. The Carolinas Rehabilitation staff designed an individualized rehabilitation plan for Philip, which included daily physical, occupational and speech therapy, as well as nursing and neuropsychological care.

A retired lieutenant colonel from the Army, Philip was no stranger to hard work and was up to the challenges of rehabilitation. “Philip’s determination to reach his goals has helped in his recovery. He’s acutely aware of his deficits and is so motivated to work to improve on the things that are difficult for him,” says Katie Williams, Philip’s physical therapist. Williams works with Philip each day on transfers, standing and walking.

Also fueling Philip’s motivation to strive for and reach his therapy goals was his family—a constant source of inspiration. Just the mention of his



## PHYSICIAN FOCUS

William L. Bockenek, MD

two daughters' names, for instance, causes Philip's face to light up.

Since beginning therapy, Philip has worked daily on his vocabulary and speech and has been able to improve his walking. "Since his arrival to our inpatient rehab unit, Mr. Yang really has been a pleasure to work with," says Shilpa Kasuganti, MD, Philip's physician. "In addition, his wife has been a tremendous advocate for him, especially given his speech limitations from his aphasia."

### THE ROAD AHEAD

Before his accident, Philip and Debbie played a lot of tennis. Thinking about life after they leave Carolinas Rehabilitation, they're considering continuing their tennis matches—this time on the Nintendo® Wii™. Philip also looks forward to fishing, as well as spending time with his family.

Yet, Philip knows his life is forever changed because of his accident. "You have to be prepared to change your life after injury," he acknowledges. But with his devoted wife by his side, Philip is ready to face whatever comes next. He and Debbie both strive to live life in the moment and not focus on things they can't change.

"Philip and his wife make such a great team in his rehabilitation," says Williams. "They're able to find the silver lining in the worst of situations." ■

**W**illiam L. Bockenek, MD, is the medical director of Carolinas Rehabilitation and chairman of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) at Carolinas Medical Center. He's also the director of Carolinas Rehabilitation's Post-Polio Clinic.

An 18-year member of the Carolinas Rehabilitation team, Dr. Bockenek graduated from the University of South Florida and completed his residency at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. He is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation and electrodiagnostic medicine, with a subspecialty certification in spinal cord injury medicine.

Dr. Bockenek is a member of several local, regional and national organizations. He's the director of the American Board of PM&R, chair of the American Physiatric Education Council, a delegate to the American Board of Medical Specialties and the current secretary/treasurer of the American Paraplegia Society. Dr. Bockenek has also written articles in several peer reviewed journals.

Among other honors, Dr. Bockenek was awarded the outstanding performance award for highest achievement in the 1999 subspecialty examination in spinal cord injury medicine. He also received the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's Department of PM&R Alumni Award and the Parker J. Palmer "Courage to Teach" Award. In addition, Dr. Bockenek is a member of the Gold Humanism Honor Society.

"Dr. Bockenek is an astute clinician, a dedicated teacher and a national leader," says James McDeavitt, MD, senior vice president of the Division of Education and Research. "He has a real passion for improving the lives of people with disabilities." ■

### ⇒ MEET OUR DEDICATED STAFF

Visit [www.carolinasrehabilitation.org](http://www.carolinasrehabilitation.org) to learn more about the physicians and other medical staff members at Carolinas Rehabilitation.



# Adaptive Childcare Training

Program helps  
parents with spinal  
cord injuries

**A**dapting to life after a spinal cord injury can be daunting for anyone. For parents who've experienced a spinal cord injury, relearning how to take care of your children as well as yourself can be even more overwhelming.

To aid these individuals, Carolinas Rehabilitation offers Adaptive Childcare Training, a unique program for spinal cord patients with children.

"Having or raising a child when you have a spinal cord injury is feasible with the right education and training," says Dawn Auten, a certified occupational therapist assistant.

Adaptive Childcare Training,

provided on either an inpatient or outpatient basis, gives patients the necessary skills to care for children, grandchildren or other family members. Carolinas Rehabilitation's expert team teaches patients how to adapt daily activities to best fit their needs and functional abilities. The staff can help with all aspects of childcare, including feeding, transferring a baby to a crib or a stroller, changing diapers or engaging in a child's development.

The program is often initiated before childbirth to prepare those with a spinal cord injury for what to expect with a newborn child. The program's staff can educate patients about the types of equipment needed at home and provide the names of manufacturers of adaptive nursery furniture, such as changing tables or other items that will be used.

After childbirth, Carolinas Rehabilitation can help patients develop safe and novel childcare techniques. Our transitional living apartment helps patients practice these new techniques in a homelike environment before being discharged. ■



▲ William Scelza, MD, a spinal cord injury physician at Carolinas Rehabilitation, with one of his sons, Dominik

## OUTPATIENT SERVICES

### FEELING OFF BALANCE?

Find help at the Better Balance Program

**I**n an effort to decrease the number of accidents, injuries and deaths related to falls, Carolinas Rehabilitation, in collaboration with CMC-Home Care, recently introduced the Better Balance Program.

The Better Balance Program uses the most recent evidence-based treatment strategies for improving balance and reducing falls, including individualized treatment plans, fall risk

screenings in the community and fall prevention education such as home-safety tips.

"We work on not only improving the balance skills of our patients but also improving the confidence our patients need in building their strength to live a healthier lifestyle," says Sonya Rissmiller, MD, a physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at Carolinas Rehabilitation. "This

program enables them to seek out activities they previously would have avoided, and many notice improvement after a few visits."

The program also includes computerized balance testing and training, patient follow-up and monitoring after discharge, group exercise programs and presentations to community groups and medical professionals about balance and fall prevention.

All of Carolinas Rehabilitation's 11 outpatient locations offer the Better Balance Program. Homebound patients can receive the program's services in the comfort of their homes through CMC-Home Care. ■

# Specialized stroke care

Carolinas Rehabilitation offers comprehensive rehabilitation services for people who have experienced a stroke. One of the largest stroke rehabilitation programs in the Southeast, Carolinas Rehabilitation recently received accreditation as a stroke program by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Carolinas Rehabilitation's stroke program consistently meets or exceeds national stroke rehabilitation guidelines.

## INDIVIDUALIZED TREATMENT

Many stroke survivors face the challenge of reacquiring cognitive and physical functions. Whether the need is to regain speech, relearn motor skills or both, Carolinas Rehabilitation creates individualized treatment programs that maximize each patient's chances for success.

The stroke program is led by board-certified rehabilitation specialists who subspecialize in stroke rehabilitation.

"Our primary focus is neuroplastic recruitment to maximize the

overall long-term outcome for our patients. However, we recognize that patients still have to live and function in the here and now," says Vu Q.C. Nguyen, MD, director of the stroke program. "Therefore, we augment the primary program with training that focuses on activities of daily living and mobility."

The interdisciplinary stroke team provides inpatient and outpatient services; physical, occupational and speech therapies; psychotherapy; neuropsychology; clinical social work; rehab nursing; case management; and recreation therapy.

Since gaining the fullest possible recovery from a stroke can take many months, Carolinas Rehabilitation encourages patients and family members to be involved in establishing and achieving goals. Families can attend treatment sessions so they can learn to care for, support and encourage patients in their journey to recovery.

## CONTINUING CARE

The outpatient program at Carolinas Rehabilitation includes

## ⇒ ADVANCED CARE, RIGHT HERE

Restoring stroke patients to the highest possible level of functioning is within reach at Carolinas Rehabilitation. To make a referral, call **704-355-3558** or **1-877-REHAB51**.

interdisciplinary services and follow-up with a board-certified rehabilitation specialist for at least 12 months. Physician clinics include stroke rehabilitation, spastic hypertonia and acupuncture. Other outpatient services such as a driving evaluation program, psychotherapy and neuropsychology, constraint-induced movement therapy, vocational rehabilitation, stroke survivor support groups and medical social work are also available after discharge. ■

## ⇒ THE ACCREDITATION ADVANTAGE

Carolinas Rehabilitation was one of the first facilities in the nation to apply for and receive CARF stroke accreditation; it has been CARF certified since 1978. Carolinas Rehabilitation is also involved with several acute care hospitals that have received Joint Commission Primary Stroke Center Certification. These certifications recognize centers that make exceptional efforts to foster better outcomes for stroke care.

✓ Members of the interdisciplinary stroke team at Carolinas Rehabilitation





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## AWARDS, ACCOLADES & PUBLICATIONS

- Patients from Carolin Rehabilitation-Mount Holly rated the overall quality of care at the 100th percentile for excellence for three consecutive quarters.
- Carolin Rehabilitation is a collaborating site on a grant from the National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation and Research to study the effects of various aspects of inpatient and outpatient treatments during the first year of traumatic brain injury.
- Peggy Treacy, director of speech and audiology at Carolin Rehabilitation, was appointed to a three-year term by Governor Easley to the North Carolina Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.
- Marco Caiazza received the 2007 Mabel Parker Award from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill for excellence in clinical teaching.
- Carolin Rehabilitation physicians have published in more than 160 medical publications. Recent examples include:
  - ♦ *Hirsch MA, Dulin M, Iyer SS, Hammond FM: Management and treatment of Parkinson's disease with exercise. American Family Physician, In Press.*
  - ♦ *Nelson MR: Birth Brachial Plexus Palsy. In: Maria BL (Ed): Current Therapy in Child Neurology, 4th Edition, BC Decker, 2008.*



## HOW TO REACH US

### CAROLIN REHABILITATION

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**VISIT US ONLINE:** [www.carolinrehabilitation.org](http://www.carolinrehabilitation.org)

## ASAP hits the slopes

This winter, the Adaptive Sports and Adventures Program (ASAP) at Carolin Rehabilitation held a Learn to Ski clinic with Disabled Sports USA (DSUSA) at Ski Beech in North Carolina. This four-day clinic—the oldest adaptive ski clinic in the nation—is designed to serve persons with disabilities who are interested in snow skiing.

ASAP participants and volunteers look forward to the Learn to Ski clinic each winter. About 125 participants took part in this year's event.

The Learn to Ski clinic was the first of a group of national clinics started by DSUSA. Hosted by Ski Beech for 28 years, it's run as a cooperative effort among sports programs, ASAP and other sponsors, who bring together the instructors, equipment and resources to teach skiing or snowboarding to people across the Southeast.

This year's youngest skier, age 4, is a member of ASAP. In addition, Charlotte's Michael Taschke won the Tony Delane Memorial Scholarship, which is awarded to a student at the event who has the passion to ski. ■

## ⇒ GET ACTIVE!

To learn more about the Learn to Ski clinic or any other programs at ASAP, visit [www.carolinrehabilitation.org](http://www.carolinrehabilitation.org).