

Neuro Rehab Results Newsletter

September 27, 2010

Vol. 1 Issue 2

Neuro Rehab Results

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Research participants wanted...

At Neuro Rehab Results, we try and base treatments on up-to-date research. Research cannot take place without testing new treatments with participants. So there are a few studies based at AUT University that are looking for participants. Participation is entirely voluntary, but if you are interested then please read the brief information about the studies on the next page. Feel free to talk to Suzie Mudge about either of these studies.

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This is our second newsletter!

We have had a busy couple of months since our last newsletter. In this issue, you can read about what we've been up to and what is planned for the remainder of the year. We welcome any suggestions (or content!) for our next newsletter, which will come out at the beginning of 2011.

Arm Clinic

Many of you may be aware that we recently ran a small pilot project called 'Arm Clinic' and we would like to say a big thank you to all those who participated and gave feedback.

So to give you a bit of background... We were looking for ways to improve arm recovery. Research tells us that a lot of practice of meaningful activities helps drive improvements. Because we know this, we often give patients exercises to do at home, however, we are aware that patients may find these difficult to do. So we came up with the idea of a group situation that could effectively double the amount of arm practice in the clinic, at the same cost to patients. So what this meant was that in one group we had eight patients and four therapists. The exercises and activities were similar to a therapy session, but lasted twice as long. There was a mixture of independent work, supervised work, work with one of the therapists and also an opportunity to do some group activities, which added an element of fun.

The feedback indicated that most patients enjoyed the sessions and found them beneficial. Some of you suggested improvements for next time and we thank you for your good ideas, which we will certainly take into account.

So we're excited to offer **Arm Clinic** again. We plan to run it for four weeks in November. So the dates and times are:

- Monday 1st November, 1-3pm
- Friday 5th November, 1-3pm
- Monday 8th November, 1-3pm
- Friday 12th November, 1-3pm
- Monday 15th November, 1-3pm
- Friday 19th November, 1-3pm
- Monday 22nd November, 1-3pm
- Friday 26th November, 1-3pm

If you'd like to take part, please contact Sue Buswell (480 6464 or sue@neurorehab.co.nz) to book in. You can book in for as many or as few sessions as you would like. Bookings close on 22 October, 2010 as we have a lot of organization to do! Please talk to your therapist if you would like to know if you would benefit from participating.

Calling all Travellers!

"Some "accessible" places had plenty of room inside, but getting through the door was impossible in a wheelchair because of the step!"

"It had a ramp, but I didn't like it because it was unsafe for my walker".

Sound familiar? Frustrated with travel information of all kinds (accommodation/transport/leisure activities, restaurants...) that either says nothing or too little to tell whether any physical impairment you have might be a problem?

My name is Richard Fanselow. I am part of a (currently) small group looking at a perhaps slightly different way to avoid such problems. "Looking" is actually a key word because we are experimenting with mainly visual ways to give people across the range of disabilities – arthritis, muscular dystrophy, paraplegia, quadriplegia, stroke etc information so they/you can assess for yourselves things like whether a hotel room might work for you, a leisure activity is one you could do, a train is one you could travel on.

On the right is how this could be done for hotel/motel units – using a combination of a photo, layout diagram and notes on important things like step height, narrowest width, bathroom fittings etc. This information would be provided for each room.

The idea is to take a similar visual approach to show what leisure activities and transport might be like – riding a quad bike, boarding a scenic cruise boat, buses, etc.

Key features are:

- It's all about self-assessment – you decide what suits you so you know before you travel what to expect;
- It's for people with physical disabilities of all kinds;
- It's not intended to be a separate "travel information for the disabled" website – it would mainly provide this information on established sites like the AA and Jason's accommodation guides, I-sites, national carrier sites;
- With accommodation, the information would eventually be for all hotels, motels, B&Bs – not just "access" facilities.

And YOU can help. Suzie and Kirsty at Neuro Rehab Results are giving helpful advice, but the more people interested/ able to join us, or provide travel stories (good and bad), or any kind of comment, the easier it should be to convince travel operators that this kind of information is both good for their business, and a great way to ensure all of us enjoy our travel.

My contact details are:

Richard Fanselow,
phone 479 7702; e-mail fanselow@orcon.net.nz



Bathroom

- Toilet with handrail
- Detachable shower hose
- Shower seat not provided

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Living Well Research Project

Are you interested in taking part in some research aiming to:

- Explore ways disabled people stay (or become) healthy?
- Hear your view on the best ways for disabled people to take part in physical activity and eat healthily?

We are keen to talk to people who meet all the following criteria:

- Aged 10 – 65 years
- Have a physical, sensory or intellectual impairment;
OR are family/whanau of someone with a physical, sensory or intellectual impairment
OR provide advocacy or services for either of these groups.
- Are able to take part in an interview or focus group (with the help of a support person, if preferred or required).

If you think you may be interested in taking part and/or would like more information, you can contact one of the research team on our study free phone number: 0800 LIVE WELL (0800 548 393) or look at the website: <http://livingwellstudy.aut.ac.nz/>. There is also the option of taking part in the online discussion forum for those who would prefer this medium

http://livingwellstudy.aut.ac.nz/?page_id=226

We are still looking for patients of Neuro Rehab Results to take part in the Activity Coaching Project...

What is the purpose of the study?

People with neurological conditions make improvements in walking as it is measured in a physiotherapy clinic, which does not necessarily translate into improved walking in other environments. An Activity Coaching session will be added to standard physiotherapy to try and improve walking in other environments. We will test the Activity Coaching programme for usefulness and effectiveness for improving 'real-world' walking.

Who is able to take part?

- If you are currently receiving physiotherapy with a goal of improving your walking.
- If you have walking difficulties as a result of your condition
- If you have had a stable neurological condition.

Phone: 09 921 9999 X 7096 (Suzie)
09 921 9999 X 8697 (Caroline)

Getting to know a staff member...

Kirsty MacKinnon, occupational therapist

Tell us about your career up until this point.

I graduated from AUT in 2003 and began working at Auckland hospital as a junior OT in the rotation programme. I gained a broad base of skills in a variety of clinical areas. The opportunity arose in 2005 to go to Kazakhstan in Central Asia and be a part of a small group setting up a centre for children with disabilities. I was part of a team of Americans, Germans, Kazakhs, Russians and a Kiwi! We did assessment and treatment, as well as gave seminars and training sessions to national workers on the roles and skills of occupational therapists and physios. Following three months in Kazakhstan I returned to New Zealand and began working at Neuro Rehab Results in March 2006.

What kinds of things does OT do?

Occupational Therapy can be a hard occupation to describe! The best way to describe OT is to say that we are interested in helping people gain function in everyday activities following illness or injury. We take into account the physical, cognitive, psychological, spiritual and social aspects of a person and consider how these are impacted by illness or injury. We usually sit down with clients and their families and discuss with them what they think are the most important activities to work on and gain independence in.

For example, most recently I have been working with some clients on using their arms (following stroke or brain injury) to hold utensils, fruit, and cups so that they can eat and drink. These have been great achievements for the particular clients who are working towards these goals. Remember, if there is something that you have been working on in OT or physio that you want to share with the world - then a good place to do that is the Neuro Rehab Results Facebook page.

Here are a few other things that OTs do:

- Assess and treat cognitive difficulties to enable people to manage in everyday life (memory, attention and concentration, planning skills, information processing skills etc.).
- Assess and provide adaptive equipment to enable more independence in completing daily tasks.
- Assess and provide wheelchairs and cushions for independent mobility.
- Assess and treat arm and hand function. This might include a review to see if functional electrical stimulation might be suitable to help people regain hand function.

OTs might be involved in working with adults or young people or children in these areas. We work in the clinic, in people's homes and also school and work environments - basically where ever we are needed!

Getting to know a staff member continued...



Kirsty MacKinnon, Occupational Therapist

Tell us about your future plans.

Well, I enjoyed my time in Kazakhstan so much, that I am preparing to return in early 2011! For the past 5 years Kazakhstan has never been far from my thoughts, and now is the right time in my life to return and work once again in the rehab centre. Things have changed a fair bit in the centre since 2005, they have a more established presence in the capital city of Astana, and are serving over 60 families - with just one physio and one OT. I am hoping to once again be involved in the local orphanage for children with disabilities.

What challenges do you anticipate?

Kazakhstan is still in the process of finding its feet since the fall of communism in the former USSR in the early 1990s. Some perceptions about health and disability seem to be based more on cultural tradition, which I find very challenging. For example, a mother who has a child with a disability must have 'done something very bad to deserve this'. Those kinds of thoughts are not uncommon, and it is a challenge to suggest that this is not the case at all.

Equipment resources are lacking in Kazakhstan, and there is the need on the part of therapists to be inventive in problem solving and making equipment that will meet the needs of the clients. There is some specialist equipment that can be accessed from overseas, but it is often very costly and you cannot always guarantee that items will make it through the postal /courier system!

Language and communication will be a challenge. I have been learning Russian for the last 6 months, which is the everyday language among most people. Kazakh is also spoken and is the 'heart' language of the Kazakhs (much like the Maori language is to Maori people in New Zealand). One day I hope to learn Kazakh as well, although I think I have to take it one language at a time! I am expecting a steep language learning curve when I arrive in Kazakhstan.

What are you looking forward to?

I am looking forward to a change in direction and a challenge to my practice as an OT; I will be working mostly with children, although there may be some scope to work with adults also. I am looking forward to working cross culturally in a completely different context to New Zealand.

What do you want to be doing in 10 years time?

Wow...10 years time, I think only God knows what I'm going to be doing in 10 years time! However, I would love to still be working with people, whether using my OT skills or in some other role and hopefully making a difference in people's lives.



Children from the orphanage
(taken during Kirsty's 2005 stay)

New brochure has arrived

In the last newsletter, we mentioned that we were expecting delivery of our new brochure. This duly arrived and now they can be picked up from the clinic. Please contact Sue Buswell (sue@neurorehab.co.nz) if you want copies of the brochure mailed to you.