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## THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

### PHYSIOTHERAPY IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM

BY BRANDI JOHNSON

Whether you find yourself struggling with an old injury, or are experiencing new pain or discomfort, whether you aspire for improved mobility or to wish to tackle a new challenge, Manitoba physiotherapists can help. That said, in an effort to enjoy all that life has to offer, how to access care isn't always obvious.

"Basically, in Manitoba, there are two streams through which physiotherapy services can be accessed, public and private," says physiotherapist Sarah Conci.

Physiotherapy services in the public stream are provided at hospitals, access centres and through home care. At hospitals, physiotherapy services are offered for both inpatients and outpatients. Inpatient means people who are hospitalized overnight for a period of time, and outpatient means people attending an appointment only, and do not stay overnight at the hospital. Understanding this distinction is important when considering how one might access physiotherapy services.

If you are hospitalized and your health-care team determines physiotherapy services are needed, they will be provided during your stay by the inpatient physiotherapy team. Part of their role as physiotherapists is to ensure you have the movement skills to be able to manage your day-to-day tasks at home once you are discharged from the hospital.

This may mean teaching you to walk again after having a stroke, teaching you how to use crutches after you've broken a leg, or teaching you how to get in and out of bed post surgery. Another very key role of physiotherapists who work in hospitals is to assist patients to recover from respiratory illnesses and maintain proper health of the cardiorespiratory system. Physiotherapists can teach you breathing techniques to help keep your lungs in good working order, or help you work on cardiovascular endurance

activities.

Outpatient public physiotherapy service provision for orthopaedic conditions underwent drastic changes in November 2017. Prior to November 2017 seven hospital sites offered outpatient physiotherapy services for orthopaedic conditions. However, outpatient orthopaedic physiotherapy services are now offered only at the Health Sciences Centre for a defined list of conditions, such as surgical repair of tendons and ligaments, periarticular fractures and complex spinal surgery.

Specialty outpatient rehabilitation services are also available for people with other conditions such as neurological and respiratory conditions, and limb amputations.

"If you're unsure whether or not you qualify for outpatient orthopaedic physiotherapy or specialty rehab services, it's best to ask your health care professional."

Private physiotherapy services may be accessed via a physiotherapy clinic, a physiotherapist who offers home visits or via tele-rehabilitation services. Anyone can see a physiotherapist through private services, and a referral is not needed.

Regardless of how you are seeking physiotherapy services, the governing body of physiotherapists, the College of Physiotherapists of Manitoba, ensures that physiotherapists meet rigorous licensing criteria.

"Many people don't realize that new graduates from the University of Manitoba Physical Therapy program have a Master's degree, followed by a rigorous testing process to obtain their licence to practice physiotherapy," Conci says.

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