

8/17/16

Patient Education Questions

- 1) If my wheelchair or scooter needs fixing, where can I go to get it repaired? What services are offered for ongoing maintenance of my wheelchair and scooter.**

If you are local you can bring it to the Palo Alto VA wheelchair repair Bldg. 5. Otherwise you can call wheelchair repair at x60135 and they will send Mobility Equipment to your home to assess and repair your chair.

- 2) I exercise regularly, but I've been injured for a long time and my shoulders hurt. I see only a few people using the power rim chairs and was wondering if they require a lot of maintenance or are they a hassle to charge up and take care of?**

Power assist wheels can increase the overall width of your chair which may affect accessibility in various locations (home, van, lift etc.) also you need to consider the weight of each wheel if you are loading them into your vehicle and already have shoulder pain. Besides charging of each wheel there is no other maintenance required. Charging of the wheels are very easy, a cord plugs into your wheel and into the wall electrical outlet. There are a few options available that you can speak directly with your OT about.

- 3) How does electrical stimulation promote wound healing? What are some other approaches to wound healing other than lying flat?**

Electrical stimulation improves circulation which brings fresh blood and oxygen to help heal the wound. The electrical stimulation can be used to produce muscle contractions around the wound area which again can help increase circulation and reduce swelling. Electrical stimulation can also help kill bacteria in a wound area. Unfortunately lying flat is the best way to take pressure off of the wound which is critical for healing. Using prone gurneys can offer you another alternative to get out of bed and off your back although your body remains flat. Positions that overstretch the tissue at the wound site reduce healing time and that why flat lying is usually the best position.

- 4) What are the benefits of doing jigsaw puzzles?**

Jigsaw puzzles can help keep you mind active as well as exercising you hands and keeping up your eye hand coordination. Puzzles work the visual spatial parts of our brains. Doing puzzles with others can also be a great way to socialize.

5) What is the best way to heal a broken bone when you have a spinal cord injury? Are there special considerations for healing and how does the bone healing affect other areas of my health?

Unfortunately bone loss occurs after spinal cord injury and fractures are common with SCI. Fracture healing is different for spinal cord injured individuals in that it takes longer and is treated differently than fractures in able bodied individuals. Using hardware such as pins can be used but often do not work for fractures in spinal cord injured individuals. For this reason often treatment is conservative and relies on for example putting and keeping the legs in straightened positions for long bone leg fractures for 10-12 weeks. While sitting in these positions can be frustrating without being able to bend the knee it allows for natural healing to occur.

6) Is there a role for Testosterone and HGH therapies in spinal cord injury rehabilitation?

Human growth hormone has not been well researched as of yet and despite its use in the world of body building its benefits and side effects to individuals with SCI are not known at this time. Testosterone therapies are still being researched as well and the downside of testosterone is that it can have a negative effect on the prostate.

7) What are some useful tips to help with the community re-entry process?

Overcoming being self conscious is important and by forcing yourself to get out and interact with other people will help you overcome this. Getting out and socializing helps prevent yourself from isolating yourself and building a closed environment. Take advantage of using Recreation Therapy to help you get out into the community. Recreation therapists can help introduce you to a wide range of activities and great people in your community. Take on roles that allow you to help educate your community on your experiences, for example helping youths understand how you can get injured drinking and driving.

8) What are some examples from other Veterans of what it took to overcome barriers to rehabilitation? What are some inspirational examples I can use to inspire me?

Getting yourself active and actively inventing and innovating ways to get tasks accomplished. One veteran stated "I figured out how to modify my fishing gear so I could use it as well as my hunting rifle so I could hunt from my car." Being flexible and

looking for solutions. Asking other veterans how they are dealing with different issues provide may with creative ways to overcome physical and mental barriers.

9) What are some private sector rehabilitation facilities or non-VA hospitals affiliated with rehabilitation centers that offer state of the art therapies for incomplete injuries?

Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, Rusk NY, Kessler Institute, NJ.

10) What is involved in the Tele-Mental Health program through the SCIU Outpatient Clinic? I heard patients get therapy on the phone or computer.

You can use a iPad or home computer. You can then directly communicate with your mental health professional and all messages are encrypted so there is complete privacy.

11) My sleep pattern is all off, any tips on getting more sleep without drugs?

Because your sleep schedule can become reversed (day becomes night) it is important to adapt a regular schedule. Purposefully being active during the day can help make sure you are tired when it's time to sleep at night. Practice good "sleep hygiene", that is keep your environment quiet at sleep time, use natural lights instead of artificial.