

Hospital rehabs WHOLE person

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On a recent winter day, the calm in the hallway of the Northern Colorado Rehabilitation Hospital was interrupted when the intercom crackled to life.

“Code William. Code William in the front lobby. Code William in the front lobby.”



Harry Dill is discharged from NCRH

Staffers stopped what they were doing and headed to the hospital’s entrance. An electricity filled the air. Then the corridor door opened from inside the hospital and the staff broke into applause punctuated with congratulations, hugs, encouragement and good wishes for Harry Dill who was being released after a week and a half stay for rehabilitation after a total knee replacement. Harry was accompanied by his son Jim and wife Ruth, who burst into tears over the celebration.

Code William is a tradition started when the hospital’s first patient (named William) went home — and it continues with each discharged patient. It is also part of what sets the hospital apart from other rehabilitation facilities in the area.



Dennis Shelby, CEO NCRH

According to Dennis Shelby, the hospital’s CEO, rehabilitation is more than just physical. It’s also emotional. “We’re an acute-care hospital, but we don’t have a lot of high-tech equipment,” he said. “What we do have is a high-touch philosophy. It’s the people and those one-on-one interventions that make the difference.”

Perhaps that is part of what has led to the hospital’s success. Shelby said he and the staff are very proud of the fact that 80 percent of the hospital’s patients are able to return to their homes. Five to 10 percent go to assisted living and the rest enter a skilled nursing center.

“We rank in the 90th percentile of facilities nationally,” Shelby said.

The 40-bed inpatient acute rehabilitation hospital, located just east of Interstate 25 on Highway 34, opened in October 2005. It provides both inpatient and outpatient rehab services for patients with “functional deficits as a result of debilitating illnesses or injuries,” according to its Web site.



NCRH Therapy Pool

The facility features all private rooms designed for the patient to be as independent as possible, a 6,000-square-foot therapy gym and a 94-degree aquatic therapy pool. A therapy courtyard offers a variety of surfaces to enhance mobility skills, and multiple day rooms that allow patients to hone their daily living skills, such as cooking, doing laundry and showering. An overnight suite is set up for patients who will need assistance from family members once they get home. It gives the patient

and their families a chance to practice skills in a safe environment and determine where additional therapy would be helpful before they are on their own. “The goal is to return patients to independence. We want to give them experience with things they have at home,” Shelby said.

Northern Colorado Rehabilitation Hospital provides similar services to facilities at area hospitals, but differs from skilled nursing centers in a few ways.

“Here we are able to provide an intensity of care that is not available in nursing homes,” Shelby said. “Every patient receives a minimum of three hours of therapy every day.” That’s about double what a nursing home can provide, he added.

“Another difference is that patients here are seen by a physician every day,” said Shelby. Two physiatrists — physicians who have done an additional residency in physical therapy and rehab — are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

“When patients are admitted, we take over their care from their primary care physician, then transfer them back when the leave,” Shelby said.

The staff also does home evaluations. “For instance, a person may have had a stroke and is declining. Our staff can go to the home and work with their doctor to determine if the person would be a candidate for inpatient therapy and they can come directly here from home,” Shelby explained. In contrast, “admission to a nursing home requires a three-day stay in an acute care hospital first.”

On this winter day, sun streams in through a multitude of windows throughout the open layout to light up the wide hallways, spacious rooms and centralized nursing station. The gym is busy with patients working with therapists on a variety of skills. A team of therapists, nurses, a physician, case managers and social workers meet to discuss patients’ care plans.

The Code William gives some of the staff a chance to congratulate a successful patient — and themselves as well.

Nurses Mary Rogers and Teresa Hallenbeck talk about what it’s like for patients and themselves at the rehab hospital.

“Our patients deserve to be congratulated,” said Rogers. “When they first come in it feels like boot camp. They work hard, but look at the results.”

Hallenbeck said she enjoys “getting to see people get well and go home.”