



REHABILITATION SERVICES



Therapy Dogs Bring Joy to Young Patients

Belle and Millie are two of the most popular visitors among Tampa General Hospital’s youngest patients. The facility dogs have become a fixture in the Muma Children’s Hospital, providing companionship and comfort during minor procedures, tests and scans. Belle, the resident golden retriever, joined the team first in 2020.

Following the overwhelmingly positive response to her, TGH welcomed Millie, a half-golden, half-lab retriever. Originally trained to be service dogs, both were deemed “too nice and too friendly” to be service dogs, but were a perfect fit for TGH pediatrics, where some patients stay for several weeks.

Since November 2023, TGH has been spearheading a one-year research project to demonstrate the impact of therapy dogs on our pediatric patients’ overall experience – particularly given the lack of research on animal-assisted therapy today. The study was funded by a grant through PetSmart Charities to create an animal-assisted therapy program for pediatric patients at the Muma Children’s Hospital at TGH.

To date, the study has focused on two groups of children ages 2 through 17 for two weeks. Each patient enjoys multiple sessions with Belle and Millie, accompanied by Child Life Specialists trained to incorporate their services into patient visits. One group receives animal-assisted therapy from the start of their stay, while the other

group is introduced to Belle and Millie a few days into treatment. As hoped, the therapy has helped to increase feelings of security, well-being and joy with patients and their families during sometimes stressful and scary hospital visits.

According to Dr. Paul Kornberg, medical director of the pediatric rehabilitation program at TGH, “Over the past few months, we’ve discovered that early intervention with Belle and Millie has helped reduce anxiety and enhanced positive outcomes for the pediatric patients in our care,” he said. “We’ll continue to explore the use of pet therapy as we continue to participate in the study and find more uses for our therapy dogs.”

When Belle and Millie aren’t helping patients with the research project they’re involved in, you can find them in pediatrics doing their day job – patients following Orthotopic Liver Transplantation bringing joy and smiles everywhere they go.

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Keeping Kids Safe with TGH Bike Helmet Program

From bicycles and scooters to Rollerblades and skateboards, kids are always on the go. While an active lifestyle is important, these adventures can also result in accidents and wipeouts with minor to life-threatening results.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, bicycle riding is one of the leading causes of sport-related head injuries in pediatrics, resulting in an estimated 26,000 emergency department visits annually. Yet, an alarming number of children don't always wear a helmet.

Bike helmet safety can go a long way in saving lives and significantly reducing the risks of severe injury. Florida state law requires all bicycle riders and passengers under the age of 16 to wear a helmet to help prevent head trauma. As Tampa Bay's first and only Level I Pediatric Trauma Center, on the west coast of Florida, Tampa General Hospital Muma Children's Hospital treats the region's most critically ill and injured pediatric patients 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Our team members have firsthand experience with trauma related to lack of helmet usage among young patients.

"We were treating many kids following cycle accidents where a helmet was not used or was fitted improperly, which can always be a factor in injury prevention," said Anne Blevins, the pediatric trauma program coordinator at TGH Muma Children's Hospital. "Proper fitting and access to helmets that meet the U.S. safety standards is a top priority," she said. In 2012, Tampa General launched its Bike Helmet Safety program to protect children from future injuries.

In partnership with MORE Health, Tampa General has trained staff members as "certified helmet fitters," where pediatric patients upon discharge were fitted with a correctly sized helmet – provided at no charge through nonprofit partnerships and donations. Proper fitting helps to ensure that the helmet doesn't slide down or move around, covers the top of the forehead, and fits securely around the chin.



Today, the hospital has 12 certified fitters on staff from nurse practitioners, pediatric trauma team members, nurses, physical/occupational therapists and child life specialists who are available 24/7 for support.

Over the past two years, the team has fitted more than 80 patients from toddlers through age 17.

Speaking Up for Innovation!

Speech-Language Pathologists play a key role in rehabilitation for both adult and pediatric patients, caring for a wide range of individuals recovering from surgery, stroke, brain injury and more. At Tampa General Hospital (TGH), the speech pathology team is always looking at best practices to enhance patient care, improve outcomes and return patients to their daily lives as soon as possible.

With this directive in mind, the team has tackled two new innovative tools to help patients.

REST (Robust Esophageal Sweep Test)

The first is REST (Robust Esophageal Screening Test), which is the only standardized screening for dysphagia (trouble swallowing) in the esophagus. The protocol was developed by Dr. Stephanie Watts of USF's Department of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery. She has been training TGH team members since 2022 on the use and benefits of the tool.

Historically, speech pathologists have administered a Modified Barium Swallow (MBS) study to see what the mouth, throat and sometimes esophagus looks like when someone swallows. But recently there's been a push to better understand the esophagus, since it can impact other systems. This is where REST can help.

The test includes: giving a patient a graham cracker with barium pudding on it and watching them swallow it; giving them two sips of liquid barium and watching them swallow it; and giving them a barium tablet with water and watching them swallow it. Based on each of these steps - graham cracker, two sips of liquid and one tablet - the patient receives a pass or fail on each.

REST adds just three minutes compared to a traditional MBS study, yet provides significant additional information for our team members. More than 60% of patients who are given an MBS are also given REST and the result is better, more comprehensive care.

REST has enabled TGH to better address patients' concerns with their

swallowing due to enhanced visualization. When necessary, requests for additional imaging can be made with more certainty.

Orthotopic Liver Transplantation (OLT)

During her studies, Tara Segalewitz, a TGH Speech-Language Pathology Clinical Fellow at the time, expressed curiosity about the prevalence and detection of dysphagia in patients following Orthotopic Liver Transplantation (OLT). She found that to date, there has only been one published study related to liver transplantation and dysphagia even though liver transplant patients are at significant risk for dysphagia due to frailty, pulmonary complications, ventilation issues and other concerns.

As a result, TGH began a study of liver transplant patients following transplantation. In the study, team members administer a bedside swallow evaluation, to determine if further care was needed. Additional measures were utilized, including REST, as well as DIGEST (Dynamic Imaging Grade of Swallowing Toxicity) and FOIS (Functional Oral Intake Scale), to help quantify the swallowing function or dysfunction.

The data showed that of the 98 patients who participated, 46 failed the enhanced bedside screener, indicating a significant need for additional evaluation and support from Speech-Language Pathology in this population. Dysphagia was found in 23% of patients. Team members reported that 66% of participants had an abnormal REST, indicating esophageal concerns requiring further examination and possible treatment.

Further research offers us a proactive way to address health issues before or as they arise.

As a result, TGH Speech-Language Pathologists are in the planning phase of training team members to complete the enhanced bedside screening.

Through innovative tools like REST and OLT Swallow Screening, our speech language pathologists continue to innovate and educate as they provide the best care possible for TGH patients!

Restoring Hope and Dignity for Patients with Dysphagia

Most of us can freely eat and drink whatever we like without the fear of choking. But more than 590 million people globally suffer from trouble swallowing, also known as dysphagia.

Dysphagia is caused by another health condition, like a head injury, stroke, dementia, certain types of cancer or specific medications. Dysphagia can also cause someone to experience other health issues, like difficulty breathing, malnutrition, dehydration or pneumonia. As a result, those who experience it are often being treated for other health issues.

The IDDSI (International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative) was formed so people with dysphagia could safely eat and drink. IDDSI provides a framework that serves as a common language for naming and describing food texture and drink thickness, and can provide access to resources to encourage global adoption and use of IDDSI.

IDDSI rates liquids and solids on a scale from zero to 7, with zero being a thin liquid and 7 being a regular solid.

TGH speech pathologists, nurses, clinical dietitians, dietary ambassadors and chefs collaborated to launch the initiative for its patients.

IDDSI Framework

More recently, Speech Language Pathologist Alicia Stermer courageously spoke up about consistency of meal presentations and patient dignity during mealtime to her leadership team. From there, an effort was made to regroup. The team now focuses on conducting regular kitchen visits and quality audits, leading collaborative discussions around what is working and what is not, as well as what needs to be streamlined or addressed.

Now that the initiative has been in operation for a few years, the team is taking it up a notch!



TGH had vendors present options, conduct taste tests and consider additional tools in the kitchen to make it happen. In addition to reviewing menus and expanding options for patients on modified diets, all team members at TGH are involved in continuous IDDSI education.

The result of the collaboration is tasty, healthy food that every patient at TGH can enjoy!

TGH Gives a Lift to Injury Prevention



Did you know that a nurse typically lifts an average of 2.2 tons each day? Moving and lifting patients puts caregivers at high risk for back injury and more, which is why safety and prevention are so critical.

Today, safe patient handling programs are being implemented at hospitals like Tampa General Hospital (TGH) to help reduce these risks among team

members. The initiative involves the use of assistive devices to ensure that patients can be mobilized safely, while reducing the risk of a caregiver injury and improving the quality of patient care.

In 2002, Tampa General Hospital developed its first Injury Prevention Team – the first of its kind in Florida – to protect nurses and health care workers from on-the-job injuries – before much of the equipment they currently use was even available. Today, the team consists of 30 Injury Prevention Technicians who help an average of 150 patients in and out of bed every day. Each Injury Prevention member participates in an eight-week Safe Patient Handling and Mobility (SPHM) technology training program to manage lift devices like the HoverMatt® Air Transfer System and the Hoyer Deluxe Power Lift. From bed transfers to bariatric admissions to equipment maintenance, the Injury Prevention Team helps to reduce falls, increase patient safety and enhance patient satisfaction.

Caregivers around the world have been inspired by this innovation and have followed TGH's lead in learning how to model the injury prevention program in their hospitals.

“Today, 65% of patient rooms at TGH have ceiling lift capability with motors installed in-room. Others are portable motors and hook up to the track,” said Manon Labreche, TGH Injury Prevention Program Manager. “TGH's investment in innovative equipment has been well worth it given the positive impact on quality and outcomes. To date, the initiative has reduced nursing injuries by 80% and reduced injury-related costs by 90%.”

Graduates of the Tampa General Hospital Pediatric Rehabilitation program gathered for a fun holiday party with their caregivers in December. It was the 16th annual Reindeer Reunion, and everyone came out for this special celebration: the therapy dogs, the mini therapy horses, the Star Wars characters, Disney princesses, Spiderman, and the big man himself, Santa Claus – who passed out gifts for the children. There was cookie decorating, face painting, music and more. Dr. Paul Kornberg, medical director of the TGH Pediatric Rehab program shared a heartfelt message on behalf of the team.



About Tampa General Hospital Rehabilitation Services

Rehabilitation Services at Tampa General Hospital is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for the following:

- Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation – Pediatric Rehabilitation Patients
- Rehabilitation Services is also designated by the Florida Department of Health as a provider of services to pediatric Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP) patients. Our services are accredited by The Joint Commission, and TGH is proud to be a Magnet Hospital.



In addition to pediatric rehabilitation inpatient programs, the continuum of care includes services provided by hospital-based rehabilitation therapists and outpatient rehabilitation services.

RehabMatters

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is published by Tampa General Rehabilitation Services for its patients and other stakeholders.

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Director of TGH Rehabilitation Services

For more information about rehabilitation programs, please go to our website www.tgh.org and look us up under Rehabilitation Services