

Mercy's rehab team teaches patients that recovery is as much a mental process as a physical one

Mind over matter

Hospitals can provide patients with rehabilitation equipment and therapy sessions, but it is the rehab professionals themselves who make the greatest difference for patients.

Mercy volunteer and advisory group member, **Randy Derausse**, well remembers his first day in Mercy's inpatient rehabilitation unit and the difference its staff made in his recovery from a stroke. He'd spent the previous week in the hospital and arrived in the rehab unit dejected and a little depressed at his condition.

But this dour outlook didn't last long.

"My therapist came in and introduced herself and asked me if I was ready to get into my wheelchair and go to breakfast," Randy said. "I was expecting her to help me into the chair, or let me lean on her. She picked me up and set me in the chair, then mentioned how much she likes throwing men around before breakfast. We both had a good laugh at that."

This set the tone for Randy's six-week stay in rehab, where the staff helped him regain the use of his right arm and leg, while teaching him the power of positive thinking.

"The entire staff was absolutely fantastic, especially my primary therapist, Amanda," Randy said. "She would not accept 'no' and she constantly pushed me to believe in myself. There was nothing negative about her. She was all positive and



Randy Derausse

she had the spirit of continuous improvement, which rubbed off on me."

Amanda taught Randy that in order to recover from his illness, he had to first believe he could walk again and regain the use of his right arm. Once he did, he placed his entire trust in the rehab team. They didn't let him down.

"I actually looked forward to going to therapy," he said. "It was challenging without

being painful, but my team gave me so much encouragement."

Like the encouragement he needed to cut his own steak.

Once Randy completed inpatient rehab, he was able to go home and begin outpatient therapy two times a week. But there were still many obstacles to overcome.

"At dinner one evening I realized I had to have my wife cut my steak for me," he said. "I couldn't do it. I felt like a little kid."

When Randy's therapist heard about this on his next visit, she brought out some putty on a plate and gave him a knife and fork. That first practice session was difficult.

"After a while, I told my therapist if this was a steak, I'd have to send it back because it's too tough," he said.

But it got easier with time and, with practice, Randy was able to cut his own steak. And walk on his own.

"I came into therapy one day, using my walker, and my therapist told me to leave the walker in the van the next time I came in. She said I didn't need it."

And he didn't.

"She believed in me, so I believed in myself. The next time I came in, I walked in on my own. I haven't used the walker since."

Randy said this sense of trust is key to a successful recovery, for any patient.

"You've got to believe in your team," he said. "In turn, they'll help you believe in yourself. And this is the best tool you can have in your recovery."

