

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life.

My guest today is Lindy Currie. She is the Community Relations and Admissions Coordinator at Lake Region Healthcare's Acute Rehabilitation Unit. She is here to talk with us about rehab and help us celebrate Physical Therapy Month a little bit here at the very end of the month. Good morning Lindy.

Lindy Currie: Good morning Katie. Thanks for having me today.

Katie Johnson: Thanks for joining me. As I mentioned, October is National Physical Therapy Month, and that's what brought this topic to the top of our mind. Physical therapy is a major component of our rehab therapies offered here at Lake Region Healthcare and our acute rehabilitation services.

Lindy, let's talk a little bit about this component of helping people in our community return to active living after a serious illness, after an injury. That's what acute rehab is all about. So just tell us about the services you offer.

Lindy Currie: Sure sounds great. We are an inpatient unit, meaning that people hunker down with us on first floor. They stay with us day and night through their stay with us, so we're a lot different from the outpatient realm that a lot of people are familiar with where people just come and go to appointments and then go home.

People actually come and stay with us. While they're here, we can offer more intensive and comprehensive therapies and medical management services to help people get back on their feet after that major health event or injury, with the ultimate goal to be able to get home as quickly and independently as possible.

Katie Johnson: Those physical therapists that we talk about that people come and see on an outpatient basis, there's a lot of them who work internally visiting these patients who are staying with us hunkered down, as you said, on acute rehab. They really are a highly qualified team of PTs.

Lindy Currie: Oh absolutely. Yeah. We have a great team of PTs here. We actually have quite a few of them, more than I think most people would realize. But yeah, so they come and they can see people while they're hospitalized on medical floor, and then transition down to us on acute rehab.

Then a lot of them are also available to transition to the outpatient basis too, so that if people need to just continue on with therapies at that lower intensity outpatient basis, that they can potentially still see their same provider that they saw in the hospital.

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Katie Johnson: We mentioned that in the patient's personal journey, the rehab unit is all about that chapter of regaining independence. It's gotta feel really good to be part of that physical and emotional part of a person's life.

Lindy Currie: Oh absolutely. Our rehab unit is typically that first step to getting back on the road to independence like you were talking about and returning home. Sometimes that journey can be relatively short and uncomplicated. Other times, it can be a very long journey that's not so neat and tidy depending on what happened or their injury or health event.

So the physical piece is their primary reason for coming to us, to work on their strength, endurance, mobility, day-to-day activities, that sort of thing. However, because we are that first step in the recovery process, there's that huge emotional aspect to their rehab stay as well.

Many of the people that we help have just had that major life event and are kind of just starting to comprehend what the heck just happened, figure out how they're going to cope, what their goals are, what their expectations are, and really the reality of what they may not be able to do now in the future.

Katie Johnson: That is so important about so many things that we do at Lake Region Healthcare when we talk about our aim to help people in our region improve their health and really wanting to focus on all seven components of wellness. It means we offer many different aspects in that holistic view. Tell us about some of the ways that you offer that kind of support to go beyond just the physical needs that they have.

Lindy Currie: Sure. Oh for sure. Like you said, we try to come at our idea of rehab in that very holistic way. How can we help this patient and their family as a whole to be in a better place when they leave us, not only physically but emotionally as well. We get the family and caregivers involved really from the get-go.

We do a lot of family training, so that they're best able to support their loved one when returning home. We involve chaplaincy, if the patient is comfortable with that. We have some great services for that here in the hospital as well. Our nursing, therapy, and social work staff are really great at educating and listening and helping to support the patient through their recovery.

And along with that social work staff, we do really have a great discharge planner on our unit. She makes sure that really all the i's are dotted, the t's are crossed before a person goes home, so that they have as little to worry about as possible. That's kind of our goal, is to just deal with yourself. Hopefully, you don't have to deal with all the other stuff as well.

From getting home health care lined up, to getting the necessary equipment like ramps or grab bars in their home, connecting them with support groups or different resources in the area like Meals on Wheels or other things like that to

kind of get them home, get them over the hump, get them back to kind of their new normal.

Katie Johnson: So we recently interviewed a patient who was on the Acute Rehab Unit, a story about Judy that our listeners will see being released soon. One of the things that struck me about her story was how much she emphasized what a difference it made to see the teamwork and the coordination of so many different individuals and departments throughout her journey. That's really one of the things that makes treatment at Lake Region Healthcare different, I think.

Lindy Currie: Oh for sure. That's so nice to hear. That's really great to hear from people in the community as well. On rehab in particular, we do have a lot of moving parts, and they're fast moving. The average length of stay with us in rehab is only about 12 days, so we really have to kind of dive in to what's going on, and how we can best help them and plan for their discharge really from the get-go.

Because of that, communication is really key. I think in a lot of different areas that we've all been parts of teams or things where communication has been dropped, or it really doesn't go well. And we all know how that turns out, not usually positive outcomes.

We really strive to always have open and constant dialogue going between the patient and their families, therapies, nursing, doctors, and any additional departments or staff that assist with their plan of care while they're with us.

Katie Johnson: That is an important component, I believe, in the accreditation that Lake Region Healthcare earns particularly in the acute rehab world. It's called CARF Accreditation, and also recently the CARF Stroke Specialty Certification. Can you tell us a little bit more about what those stand for, and how many years Lake Region Healthcare has attained that certification status?

Lindy Currie: Yeah. We are CARF Accredited, like you said, and have been since 2003. We're going on quite a while, 14 years of accreditation, which is great. CARF stands for Commission on Accreditation of Rehab Facilities, so it's a mouthful. But we are very proud of that because it really, truly does mean that we're providing the best rehab-based care for our patients.

We go through re-accreditation every three years, and like you said in the last accreditation survey that took place in 2016, we were also able to obtain our Stroke Specialty Certification, meaning that we are best equipped to care for those patients who unfortunately have had a stroke. We've always been able to take care of them but essentially, we've just upped the ante with their rehabilitation.

Katie Johnson: What do they measure, or how do they measure those things? It's kind of a rigorous process to apply and pass as I understand.

Lindy Currie: It is. CARF Accreditation really measures the quality, value, and optimal outcomes for patients that come through our program. It really strives for continuous improvement to make sure that the patients are reaching their goals. We're doing the best we can be, that our policies and procedures are essentially up to snuff with their ideas as an agency as well.

When they do visit for their survey, it's an onsite visit, where typically two surveyors come and hang out for a few days. They really look in every nook and cranny. They look through our charting, our policies, our procedures. They chat with patients that we have on the unit.

And it can be a little nerve-wracking to have them on the unit, but we always welcome them as they bring really great constructive criticism and ways to improve our services. So to us a few days of extra sweating is really worth its weight a hundred times over for the patients that we serve.

Katie Johnson: That was going to be my next question. What does it mean to the patient then? Why does this matter to them?

Lindy Currie: Yeah, well our patients really can take comfort in knowing that they will receive the highest quality care and services. CARF really promotes the person-focused standards that's based through them, so they really put the person first to increase their overall patient experience and their outcomes in order to get home.

Katie Johnson: Anything I missed that you want to make sure our listeners know about our Acute Rehab Unit, our fantastic physical therapists who work so hard on the unit that we're recognizing this month or anything else?

Lindy Currie: I just wanted to mention that we always welcome anyone who wants to take a tour. We have a beautiful unit. Anybody is welcome to come and see what we do, how we do it. If anybody has questions about our program, please feel free to give us a call.

Additionally, anyone can make a referral to us, so that's a really big thing that we want to get out to the public. It doesn't have to just come from a doctor. If you have a family member, a friend, a loved one, somebody who can benefit from rehab in the beautiful Lakes area, just reach out to us. Our phone number is 218-736-8031, and we would be happy to assist you.

Katie Johnson: Well, Lindy Currie, thank you so much for being my guest today and talking more about rehabilitation services at Lake Region Healthcare, shouting out to our physical therapists on staff here during Physical Therapy Month, and letting people know more about acute rehabilitation and our accreditation with CARF. We appreciate you and what you do. Thanks for being our guest today.

Lindy Currie: Thank you so much Katie.

Katie Johnson: Lindy Currie, Community Relations and Admissions Coordinator, my guest today on Apple a Day. Lindy and Katie reminding you that there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.