

KENNY

Independent

Sister Kenny® Rehabilitation Institute, located at 28th Street and Chicago Avenue in Minneapolis, Minn., is the leading rehabilitation provider in the region. The Institute provides programs and services at five Allina hospitals — Abbott Northwestern in Minneapolis, United in St. Paul, Unity Hospital in Fridley, Mercy in Coon Rapids and Buffalo Hospital in Buffalo — and outpatient care at 18 community-based Sister Kenny Sports & Physical Therapy Centers.

More than 60 years of “making lives work”

The original Sister Kenny Institute opened in December 1942 in Minneapolis. The Institute is named after Sister Elizabeth Kenny, an Australian woman trained in nursing (the title “Sister” is used in British countries to designate head nurse). Elizabeth Kenny’s work with polio patients in the 1940s became a foundation for modern physical therapy.

Sister Kenny’s tradition of innovative, effective rehabilitation therapy continues today. Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute’s teams of specialists provide comprehensive treatment for stroke, spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, spine rehab, work and sports-related injuries, and neurological and muscular disorders including arthritis, multiple sclerosis and speech-language disorders.

Therapist uncovers an uncommon injury

It took two general practitioners, three podiatrists and a physical therapist — plus 12 X-rays and two MRI scans — before Mary McDonald found someone who could correctly diagnose and treat her foot injury.

It was three months after her injury and McDonald’s frustration was building. She had been unable to return to her greenhouse job and even needed help with household chores.

Finally, her brother convinced her to see a physical therapist at Sister Kenny Sports & Physical Therapy Center in Minneapolis who had been treating him for chronic pain.

Although she had little hope of finding relief, McDonald made an appointment with Rick Mewes, MPT, OCS, a physical therapist who is a board certified orthopaedic clinical specialist (see accompanying article, page 5).

After explaining her injury and the diagnostic tests and therapies that had been tried, “I could tell by the look on his face that he knew what the problem was,” says McDonald.

Mewes explained that McDonald was likely suffering from cuboid syndrome, an uncommon complication of some foot injuries.

The syndrome occurs when bones in the foot splay out, allowing a small bone called the cuboid to drop out of place, explains Mewes. “It can be difficult to pinpoint but the pain can be debilitating.”

Fortunately, moving the cuboid back into place was simple. Mewes first performed some therapy on the foot and then applied pressure. The bone popped into place with a loud crack,

recalls McDonald. “It was instant relief,” she says. Mewes then iced and taped her foot and applied a steroid patch.

Finally, with her injury correctly identified and treated, McDonald was able to begin the process of rehabilitation. After not being able to walk on the foot for three months, McDonald’s foot and leg muscles were significantly weakened.

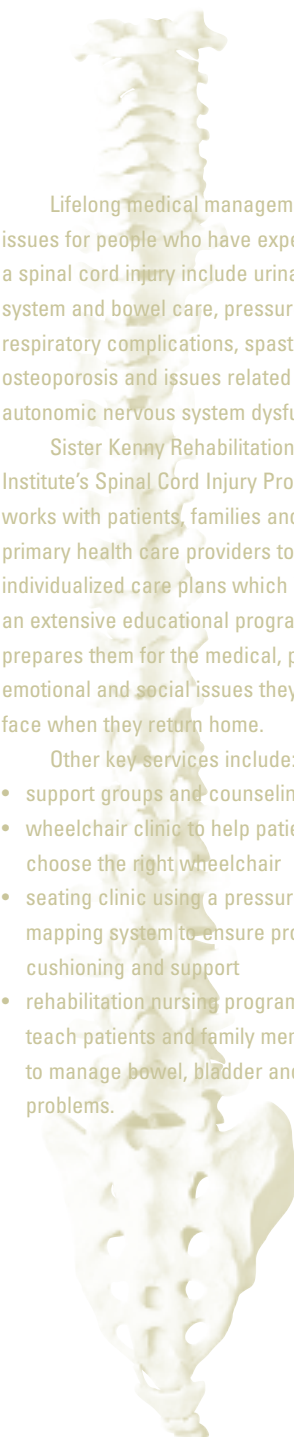


Mary McDonald, right, with physical therapist Rick Mewes at Sister Kenny Sports & Physical Therapy Center in Minneapolis.

Within four weeks, McDonald was able to resume most of her normal activities.

“After my first appointment with Rick, I not only felt physically better — I felt emotionally better,” says McDonald. “Living with pain was taking a toll on my optimism.”

Rebuilding a life: Bob Janu



Lifelong medical management issues for people who have experienced a spinal cord injury include urinary system and bowel care, pressure sores, respiratory complications, spasticity, osteoporosis and issues related to autonomic nervous system dysfunction.

Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute's Spinal Cord Injury Program works with patients, families and primary health care providers to develop individualized care plans which include an extensive educational program that prepares them for the medical, physical, emotional and social issues they will face when they return home.

Other key services include:

- support groups and counseling
- wheelchair clinic to help patients choose the right wheelchair
- seating clinic using a pressure mapping system to ensure proper cushioning and support
- rehabilitation nursing program to teach patients and family members to manage bowel, bladder and skin problems.

A car accident in November 2001 changed Bob Janu's life forever. But he has been in the process of reclaiming it ever since.

Janu hit a deer while driving home from work. He suffered an incomplete spinal cord injury at the third cervical vertebrae in the neck. At first, he could do little more than shrug his shoulders.

He was stabilized at Regions Hospital, spent two months at Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, and then lived at the Courage Center for 13 months. He now lives at home with his wife, Betty. He is committed to daily exercise and other therapies and stays active with friends and family. He also has regular appointments with Marilyn Thompson, MD, a physiatrist with Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Associates.

Although he remains a quadriplegic, he does have feeling in his extremities and has limited use of his right arm and hand. Most importantly, the injury did little to dull his gregarious spirit and his enjoyment of people.

That's not to say it's been easy. "At first, you are devastated," he says. "It's like you are starting your life over."

Fortunately, Janu has the love and support of his wife, his adult children, Tony and Angie, and his friends, neighbors and colleagues.

"You've got to have a support system," he says. "If you don't have one, you have to create one."

In fact, soon after the accident, the Janu's considered moving from their home in Scandia, Minn., to be closer to his doctors and therapists. "But then we realized what a huge support system we have after living here for 26 years," says Betty. "We just didn't realize how strong it was until we needed it. We knew that we would not be able to build that

kind of rapport with people if we moved."

Instead, they remodeled their home so that everything Janu needs is accessible on the first floor.

Janu has had his share of setbacks, including surgery to remove a rare tumor that was unrelated to his spinal cord injury. But he and Betty have worked hard to create manageable routines and to get the support they need to make it work.

Janu has a personal care attendant, which makes it possible for his wife to keep working as flight attendant. His power wheelchair is equipped with a cell phone and he has a

"You've got to have a support system. If you don't have one, you have to create one."

medical alarm that notifies authorities in case of an emergency. He is also learning how to use a voice-activated computer and hopes to return to work soon.

Recently the couple even flew to Washington to visit relatives. "We had to do a lot of homework to make sure we would have everything we needed on the other end," says Betty. That included ordering a hospital bed for the hotel room and checking with equipment vendors in case there were problems with his wheelchair.

While Janu recognizes that every spinal cord injury is unique, he believes that attitude makes the difference in living with a disability. "You have a choice to think positively or negatively. I've seen people give up so they don't even do therapy. I think if you are determined and have the right attitude, it really helps. You have to exhaust your efforts to rebuild your life."

Stroke peer group will soon be available for SKRI patients

Therapists and staff at Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute are currently developing a stroke peer group, in which former stroke patients volunteer to visit current stroke patients at Abbott Northwestern and United hospitals. The role of peer visitors is to share their experience with having a stroke, listen to a patient's concerns and provide support.

Peer visitors will be at least two years post-stroke and will receive extensive training based on guidelines recommended by the American Heart Association. If you're a stroke survivor and would like to learn more about the peer group, contact Sue Newman at 612-863-4996

“Wheelchair guy” helps patients take control

Steve Alarik’s official title is rehabilitation technician. But among patients and staff at Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, Alarik is better known as “the wheelchair guy.”

He spends much of his day with tools in hand to adjust, adapt and repair wheelchairs — but it’s his attitude about wheelchairs that may have the biggest impact on patients.

The most important thing for patients to know about wheelchairs, according to Alarik, is that “this is not rocket science.” He likes to tell patients that a wheelchair is like a bicycle turned sideways — and a power wheelchair is basically a “really swell golf cart.”

Alarik understands that people with disabilities face many challenges and often can’t control certain aspects of their condition, treatment or therapy. “But the wheelchair is one thing they can control. To survive with a disability you have to take control — and a wheelchair can help you do it.”

He should know, as a wheelchair user himself. Alarik had polio as a child and for much of his life he walked with the help of

a leg brace and crutches. But then he came across an inexpensive wheelchair and decided to try it. “For me, the wheelchair was liberating. I could get rid of the brace, carry lots of weight on my lap and go great distances. Rather than looking at the wheelchair as a negative, I saw it as a step forward.”

Alarik works closely with clinicians and therapists to help patients gain as much mobility, function and comfort as possible. “They know what they want the equipment to do for their patients. They’re part of the creative healing process. What I do is more of the nuts and bolts work.”

Wheelchairs are extremely customizable according to the user’s needs, says Alarik. Some users may not even be aware of all the features they have on their wheelchairs, such as the ability to tilt the seat on power wheelchairs or reconfigure the wheels on manual wheelchairs.

“There’s always a dance between providing adequate support and allowing more function. It’s like the difference between a task chair you use at the computer and the Lay-Z-Boy recliner,” he says.

While Alarik claims that much of what he does is fairly simple, he has taken on more complex assignments — including building a wheelchair traction device that allowed a patient to be suspended from a halo, thereby somewhat straightening her spine in preparation for a difficult surgery.

Alarik and his colleagues take pride in ensuring that Sister Kenny patients have the best possible equipment for their needs. “If our work is done right, it means the patient can be more independent.”

“To survive with a disability you have to take control — and a wheelchair can help you do it.”

Wheelchair maintenance tips

A little attention goes a long way when it comes to wheelchair maintenance. Here’s what Steve Alarik, rehabilitation technician, recommends:

- Keep the wheelchair clean. Use bicycle cleaner and polish when necessary. “Just keeping things clean will help keep your wheelchair running better and make repairs easier,” says Alarik.
- Check moving parts regularly and tighten anything that has loosened.
- Visit a bicycle shop if your manual wheelchair needs some maintenance work. Most wheelchair maintenance is comparable to basic bicycle mechanics.
- If your manual wheelchair needs more extensive work or adjustments, or if you use a power wheelchair, have a wheelchair specialist do the work. Contact your wheelchair supplier for more information.



Wheelchair technology continues to improve

Like other technologies, wheelchair technology is constantly evolving and improving. Staff from the Wheelchair Assessment Clinic can work with you to determine insurance coverage for any of the following newest wheelchair options:

Standing wheelchairs. Available as manual or power-operated, standing wheelchairs allow the user to be supported and mobile in a standing position. They are used primarily in work settings.

Bariatric wheelchairs. Just as obesity is affecting more people in the general population, it is also affecting more wheelchair users. Until recently, there were few wheelchair options for the bariatric population. Today, nearly all manufacturers offer bariatric wheelchairs.

iBot. The Independence iBot 3000 Mobility System can climb and descend curbs and stairs, raise the user to eye level and navigate many types of uneven terrain. The manufacturer has established strict criteria for who can safely use the device. Unfortunately, the cost is prohibitive for most.

Power assist manual wheelchairs. These wheelchairs are outfitted to provide an added power boost to allow individuals to continue using a manual chair when shoulder pain, weakness or fatigue might otherwise force them to go to a powered wheelchair.

For more information about these and other wheelchair options, call Rehabilitation Equipment Services, 612-863-5181.



Focus on a facility: Buffalo Hospital

Buffalo Hospital, located in Wright County, has recently partnered with Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute and Sister Kenny Sports & Physical Therapy Center (SKS&PTC) to offer rehabilitation services in three locations.

“We’ve always delivered top notch, high quality rehabilitation care,” said Mary Ellen Wells, president, Buffalo Hospital. “By partnering with Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, we’re able to further provide state-of-the-art care and access to best of practice.”

Orthopaedic, sports medicine, occupational health services for injured workers, and

physical therapy are offered at the SKS&PTC in the new Syntregy Fitness Club in Buffalo. The club is only three blocks away from the hospital, at 101 NE 14th Street. The Center also offers new programs and therapy techniques like aquatic therapy and golf swing analyses. Another SKS&PTC is located at the Allina Medical Clinic-Annandale.

Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute at Buffalo Hospital continues to offer physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. For more information, visit www.buffalohospital.org.

Orthopaedic, sports medicine, occupational health services for injured workers, and physical therapy are offered at the Sister Kenny Sports and Physical Therapy Center (SKS&PTC) in Buffalo, MN.

Physical therapists pursue advanced training, board certification

A growing number of physical therapists at Sister Kenny Sports & Physical Therapy Center are advancing their expertise through an orthopaedic clinical specialist board certification program offered by the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialists (ABPTS).

The board certification is awarded to physical therapists meeting approved requirements, including a rigorous written examination that demonstrates specialized knowledge and advanced clinical proficiency.

“Only the top percentage of candidates taking the exam receive the certification.”

*Kurt Otto, director,
Rehabilitation Therapies*

“This is the highest clinical specialty certification that a physical therapist can earn,” says Kurt Otto, director, Rehabilitation Therapies. “Only the top percentage of candidates taking the exam receive the certification. And more importantly, board certified therapists are specially trained to provide the highest possible level of rehabilitative care in a specific area.”

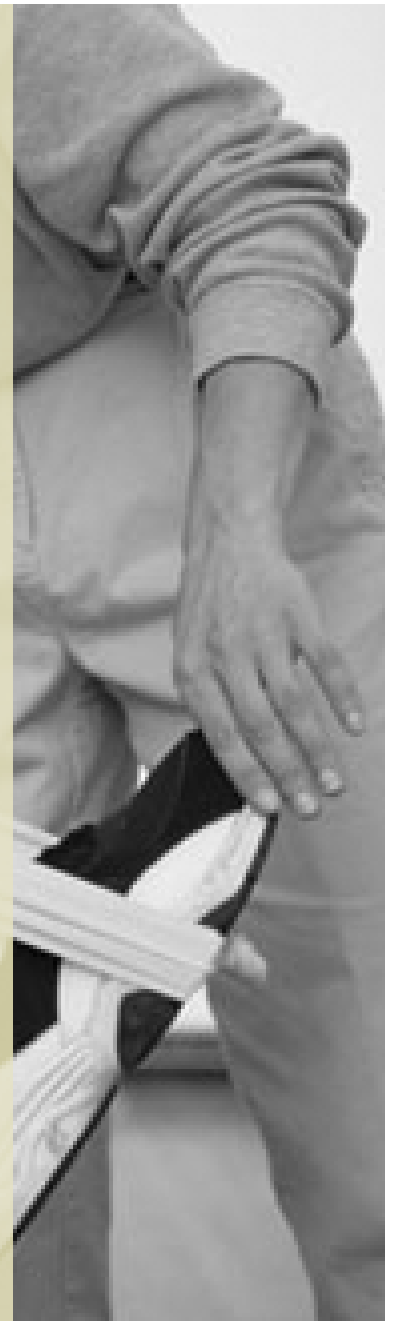
Currently, Sister Kenny Sports & Physical Therapy Center has four physical therapists who are board certified in orthopaedics. They are:

Elizabeth Ihry, MPT, OCS, Minneapolis

Carla James, MPT, OCS, White Bear Lake

Amy Prose, MPT, OCS, White Bear Lake

Megan Vaught, MPT, OCS, Minneapolis



Clinician profile: Sara Rohde, OTR/L

Sara Rohde is an occupational therapist at the Kenny Kids Pediatric Rehabilitation Program at Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids, Minn. Before joining the Sister Kenny staff at Mercy nine years ago, Rohde worked in the state's school system. Her areas of specialty include working with children who have feeding disorders, and providing education

and training in sensory processing disorders. “The thing I most enjoy about my job is hearing a hearty belly laugh from one of my patients,” said Rohde. “I also love watching a parent's expression when they see their child do something for the first time, things most other parents would consider ordinary or take for granted.”



Free for those those
with spinal cord
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Kenny Grad School

Kenny Grad School is a new educational series offered by Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute for people with spinal cord injuries, those who have experienced strokes and their families. Each free session includes a presentation related to spinal cord injury or stroke followed by group discussion.

Three sessions have been held in 2004 covering stroke education and personal care assistant issues after a spinal cord injury. Four sessions are planned for 2005. Dates and spe-

cific topics have not been finalized, but may include aging with spinal cord injury or stroke, maintaining cardiovascular health, options in resuming driving, sexuality and pain.

For more information about Kenny Grad School or details about upcoming sessions, visit www.sisterkennyinstitute.com or call 612-863-4466. There is no charge to attend a session, but registration is required.

Kenny Grad School is supported and sponsored by the Sister Kenny Foundation.

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