

ABBOTT NORTHWESTERN HOSPITAL

VOLUME 15, NUMBER 3

FALL 2007

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Karen Loewen uses the Lokomat® robot-assisted treadmill as physical therapist Keri Esser monitors her progress.

“You ask yourself, ‘Why me?’” Loewen says. “There are always people who have even worse problems, but you still ask yourself that.”

Soon after surgery, Loewen was transferred to Sister Kenny® Rehabilitation Institute at Abbott Northwestern Hospital to begin six weeks of inpatient rehabilitation. Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute offers a combination of highly skilled rehabilitation specialists, the latest in rehabilitation technology, and integrative therapies provided by the Institute for Health and Healing.

ROBOTIC LEGS

While Loewen participated in many therapies to promote strength, endurance and motor control, one of the most valuable therapies involved using a new rehabilitation technology called Lokomat®.

Lokomat is a robot-assisted treadmill that supports a patient in an upright position while moving the legs through a normal walking pattern—even if a patient is unable to move his or her legs independently. Sensors and other technologies monitor the patient’s gait pattern; measure changes in strength, range of motion and endurance over time; and allow the patient to gradually increase physical effort while ensuring safety. The Lokomat is not available anywhere else in Minnesota.

Rehabilitation specialists believe that the best way to restore walking function in patients with partial spinal cord injury, brain injury or stroke is to get the patient up and

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ABBOTT NORTHWESTERN HOSPITAL
Allina Hospitals & Clinics

Enhancing recovery

ROBOTIC LEGS, HEALING THERAPIES OFFER HOPE

AFTER SURGERY to treat a life-threatening infection in her spine, Karen Loewen faced the most difficult physical and emotional challenge of her life—learning to walk again.

Not only would it require daily, intensive physical and occupational therapy, it would also mean coping with the inevitable anxiety and stress that accompany a serious health condition.



Karen Loewen

Enhancing recovery

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walking as early as possible in their rehabilitation.

“It is thought that this type of therapy facilitates the reflexes that help the body remember how to walk again,” says Keri Esser, one of Loewen’s physical therapists.

Lokomat also helps patients build strength and endurance, which are often weakened during a long hospital stay.

“It makes you feel like you are really walking,” Loewen says. “I hated to get off of it.” Loewen soon progressed to using a walker. “I also

feel like it helped prepare me for other therapies, like learning to go up and down steps.”

HEALING THERAPIES

In addition to the advanced technology of Lokomat, Loewen benefited from the healing therapies offered by the Institute of Health and Healing, including acupuncture, therapeutic massage, healing touch

and aromatherapy.

“It was very soothing at a time when I was under so much stress,” Loewen says.

After many demanding hours of therapy every day, she found that massage and aromatherapy helped her relax and get a good night’s rest.

“Helping patients get to a place of deep relaxation is an important part of what we can offer,” says Cynthia Miller, a licensed acupuncturist and nurse with the Institute for Health and Healing. “That can be hard to do in the hospital where there are so many interruptions.”

Healing therapies can also help patients manage pain and stress.

“Coping with an injury or illness that results in a disability can be very difficult,” Miller says.

In addition to helping patients while they are in the hospital, practitioners teach patients guided imagery and other relaxation techniques that they can practice on their own.

“Many of these techniques are really helpful in the healing process,” Miller says.

Loewen is proud of the progress she has made so far and credits the staff at Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute. “They are so good at what they do. They have helped me tremendously,” she says.



For information about healing therapies and the Institute for Health and Healing, call 612-863-3333 or visit www.abbottnorthwestern.com and go to *Services & Programs*, then *Institute for Health & Healing*. To learn more about Lokomat, visit www.sisterkennyinstitute.com. Go to *Services & Programs*, then *Lokomat* under *Specialty Services and Clinics*. ♦

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- Medformation® 612-262-3333
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