

Innovative Rehabilitation Techniques Create Success

BY RHODA WEISS

This was anything but a typical fashion show. Instead of tall, lanky models whisking down a glamorous runway in the latest designer duds, these models traveled down the balloon-lined aisle of a hospital activities room decorated like a glittery ballroom. In wheelchairs, wearing artificial limbs, using canes, or with help from others, the models proudly showed off their attire. Their fashions were loaned from family, friends, or staff or selected from the hospital's on-site thrift shop, where many had relearned the skills of selecting clothes, maneuvering in a dressing room, and paying for purchases.

As part of their treatment at Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center, these severely brain-injured patients became the stars for a day as they dressed up for the first time since their catastrophic injuries to participate in this special fashion show. Sarita, in a coma for 19 days after being hit by a flying object, wore a flowered silk dress and pushed her wheelchair past the cheering crowd of family members, friends, and hospital employees. Richard, blind since birth and paralyzed on one side, got out of his wheelchair for the first time since his stroke earlier this year, his head held high, strolling confidently down the "runway" assisted by a physical therapist.

José looked fit and handsome; it had taken an hour of false starts to make his first step down the runway. A former gang member, José had been beaten and left for dead; he spent 40 days in a coma.

"For participants, this event represents an important point in their treatment. You can see them glow as they make their way down the runway," says fashion show organizer and occupational therapist Mo Johnson. This show, which was covered by the *Los Angeles Times* and ABC, was the first time many had "walked" in front of their families. It was a tremendous accomplishment for the patients to complete their walk, and research indicates that 70 percent of patients show improvement after such an event.

A NATIONAL MODEL

For 100 years, Rancho, located on a sprawling 220-acre campus in Downey, CA, near Los



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Angeles, has been the nation's leader in rehabilitation care for catastrophic spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, strokes, and other disabling conditions. Rancho helps people of all ages—from the tiniest infant to the oldest adult—with serious injuries and illnesses to resume independent lives. Rancho also offers services in gerontology, pediatrics, treatment for diabetic amputees, and pressure ulcer management. Patients and their families benefit from Rancho's medical expertise and its philosophy of nurturing patients' psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs.

"Our focus is not solely on rehabilitating the body," says Executive Director Consuelo Diaz, "but also on motivating the soul and fanning the fires of hope."

This rehabilitation approach produces outstanding outcomes and positions Rancho as a national model of rehabilitative care. Rancho attracts patients from around the world and, as a Los Angeles County Department of Health Services facility, functions as a safety net for those without insurance, those unable to pay, or those who need levels of rehabilitative care that no other facility can provide.

INNOVATIONS IN REHABILITATIVE CARE

Rancho is also internationally known for its research and innovations in rehabilitative devices and equipment. In the past 40 years, it has received more than \$100 million in grants and contracts for the Los Amigos Research and Educational Institute. Rancho's Center for Applied Rehabilitation Technology (CART) creates high-tech electronic devices, ergonomically designed computers, and practical tools that help the disabled perform daily tasks in their homes and workplaces. An electronic "liberator" helps voiceless patients speak and electronic switches and devices help the disabled use the telephone and turn on lights, radio, and television.

Rancho's internationally known pathokinesiology lab evaluates treatment methods for abnormal joint motion and muscle activity patterns that limit

Continued on page 92

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Coming Soon from CHA

For information on specific programs, contact the person listed at the end of the program description. Linda Raney can help with other questions about CHA's educational activities. Call 314-253-3507, or write Linda at CHA, 4455 Woodson Road, St. Louis, MO 63134-3797

BEHAVIORAL EVENT INTERVIEW (BEI) TRAINING

BEI technology is a powerful process for identifying and quantifying the competencies needed for successful leadership in the Catholic healthcare ministry. BEI training is intended for those responsible for identifying potential executives.

Program Coordinator:

Carol Tilley

Contact:

Linda Raney
314-253-3507

SEPTEMBER

9-11 MISSION: THE INTEGRATING THREAD

St. Louis

This seminar offers mission leaders, and other executive team members who share mission responsibilities, a forum in which they can define the mission role in a changing environment. It will include discussions of contemporary healthcare issues, mission integration in a time of cultural change, and a plan for weaving mission into the fabric of the organization.

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NOVEMBER

12-13 FOUNDATIONS OF CATHOLIC HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP

Charlotte, NC

CHA has updated the former "Foundations of Mission" to reflect the Cen-

ter for Leadership Excellence's research findings on leadership competencies. During this interactive program, participants will examine the Gospel values supporting Catholic healthcare; the mission, the ministry, and the healing tradition; the structure of the Catholic Church and its relationship to the health ministry; sponsorship issues; and the moral wisdom, social teaching, and scriptural foundations that guide Catholic healthcare today.

This program, sponsored by CHA's Center for Leadership Excellence, is designed for senior-level executives (e.g., chief executive officers, presidents, vice presidents) new to Catholic healthcare organizations.

Program Coordinator:

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JUNE 1999

6-9 84TH ANNUAL CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSEMBLY

Orlando, FL

"Let Justice Flourish in Our Time" will be the theme of the 1999 assembly—the largest national gathering of ministry leaders.

Educational Events listings are also available on CHA's website, recently renamed CHAUSA, which can be accessed at www.chausa.org.



The Future of Healthcare Today

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Continued from page 83

patients' ability to walk or use their hands and arms. Its Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center develops devices such as ankle braces, mobile arm supports, and body-powered prosthetic hands, as well as powered wheelchairs for children. Patients learn to live independently in fully equipped model homes and apartments. For people paralyzed from the neck down, Rancho invented the "mouthstick," which lets people read, write, paint, and operate computer keyboards, appliances, and equipment with electronic switches that they maneuver with chin, head, or foot. Another Rancho innovation teaches severely paralyzed patients to breathe through surgical openings in the neck.

SUCCESS THROUGH A COMMON VISION

For novice wheelchair sports enthusiasts, Rancho sponsors the Spinal Injury Games, which include basketball, hockey, football, mouthstick relays, quad rugby, dressing relays, and an obstacle course. Exhibitors demonstrate equipment and explain available community services.

"We ascribe much of our success to the Rancho spirit of common vision and innovation," says Chief Nursing Officer and Director of Professional Services Karen Wunch. "Rancho staff pioneered a unique diagnosis-driven team approach to treatment a half century ago, and today it has been as refined as a finely tuned orchestra." Each team is highly trained in a specific diagnosis and works with a patient throughout his or her rehabilitation in the Jacquelin Perry Institute, which is named after the physician who pioneered many of the rehabilitation techniques in use at Rancho. The Institute dedicates each floor to a different condition, such as spinal cord injury, brain injury, stroke, or pediatrics. Each area is self-contained with exercise and activities rooms and fully equipped apartments that allow patients to practice the tasks of daily living. □

☎ For more information, contact Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center Marketing Department at 562-401-7031.