

Views from the E-List* – Bariatric Accessibility

Query:

I have a question and was wondering if any of you could lend some advice? I want to start working with a client who weighs 550 lbs. Due to her weight, she cannot get out of her wheelchair unless she has a heavy duty lift device. No YMCA, community center, or local gym around the Detroit area is equipped to properly lower her into the water safely. The lifts at these facilities can only handle weight up to 350 lbs and the water chairs available will obviously not support that amount of weight either. The facilities have agreed to let this individual receive her workouts at their place if we sign liability & release forms and find proper equipment that will allow this client into the water safely.

Responses:

It would be great if there was a hospital near by that had a bariatric program and a pool. Your willingness to take on this task is awesome.

The Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan has essentially a crane over their warm water pool, or at least did when I was Medical Director there. I don't know if they would be willing to work with you on this patient, but it is worth a try.

Is there any possibility there is a pool in your area with a ramped entry? There is a warm water pool in Bellevue we use with a lift and a ramp. They use a pvc type waterproof wheelchair for access (you might have to create a bariatric one-the Bellevue Aquatic Center might be able to help with design). You would still have to transfer from one chair to the other to enter/exit and have enough help to get the chair up/down the ramp, or a winch with a strap to the chair to control descent and assist with exit up the ramp.

The facility I once worked at had an overhead quarter ton Hoyer lift permanently mounted on an I-Beam over the pool. Clearly, this is not exactly what you are looking for. However, that company -- Hoyer -- is nationally known for manufacture of a wide variety of lifting devices. They are:

Ted Hoyer & Company, Inc.
2222 Minnesota Street
Oshkosh, WI 54901
Phone: 920-231-7970

I could not locate their website (as Hoyer got too many "hits"), so I do not know if they sell direct to the public or not. However, if you Google "hoyer lift" you will find MANY distributors. You might need to contact the company first, and ask about your specific needs, and then ask them to recommend a distributor in your area.

RehaMed International is a great equipment source and carries a variety of pool lifts and access equipment. Contact them at www.groupm.com

Go to www.spectrumproducts.com

They have a Traveler IIXRC500 that is capable of holding 500 pounds.

I have looked into a variety of lifts and found that the weight limits may on occasion be a problem. I looked into some industrial catalogs that have a wide variety of cranes, gantry systems when combined with an electric water proof hoist can lift 1000# or even more. Combined with a Hoyer type sling this has made a safe efficient system of getting people in out of pool. Best of all its cost is no greater or even less than a commercially made pool lift. The original idea came from the system used at a local hospital to get patients in and out of a Hubbard tank.

**Opinions and suggestions expressed in this column represent e-list member responses to the query posted. They are not represented by the Aquatic Therapy and Rehab Institute and/or the author(s) of this column as recommendations regarding appropriate practice.*