

6-24-12 Elist Discussion on Total Replacement Statistics

On June 24, Megan K asks:

Hello Folks!!

I need some help. Do any of you have statistics on how many total replacement patients have gone through aquatic therapy? If you do have this information, can you please email me @ mkwitkin@gmail.com . I would like to know age ranges too if possible. Hope everyone had a great weekend!!

Terri replies:

All of Dr. Heinrich's TKR (total knee replacement) and THR (total hip replacement) patients in Austin, Texas get aquatic therapy two to three days post op (surgery or operation). He is at www.austinortho.com

He may be able to tell you how many patients he has prescribed for aquatic physical therapy in the last ten years.

Bruce replies:

There is no way to know this information, as no national (or probably state) registry exists for any therapy process, either of patients or outcomes. Why do you need to know this?

Megan adds:

I am asking because as an Aquatic Instructor, I encounter more & more people with replacements and more instructors who do not know how to create routines that benefit their participants. I teach a lot more group classes than one-on-one sessions. I want to educate the instructors out there who are not therapists.

Barb comments:

This is an excellent question, Megan. I am finding that the answer to aqua interventions as part of the continuum of care is limited because of lack of awareness of the possibilities. Thanks for making an effort to get the word out among your group exercise and personal trainer aqua colleagues. Pleased do not be daunted simply because you do not have the statistics. A few success stories should help get the point across.

I hope I will see you later today at Sanibel and that you will attend the continuum presentation Thursday. If not, please email me directly so we can continue the conversation when I return to my desk. I am interested in sharing with you what is happening here in my mid-Tennessee community and hearing more about your outreach too.

PS – Therapists who are not aqua-focused need additional awareness of the benefit of water-work as well.

Kim writes:

This brings to the forefront the lack of knowledge on how, where, when and to what extent aquatic therapy and rehabilitation has been used as a treatment modality for knee, hip, shoulder, etc. replacements. A Registry or syndicated data source would be useful. This is yet another research area in need of investigations.

Elizabeth writes:

We put every one of our replacement patients in the water unless there is some contra-indication for it. They recuperate much faster, their range of motion (ROM) is smoother, it helps with swelling, etc.....

Bruce writes:

I agree entirely. By the lack of a centralized data repository, we shall never have a real idea of therapeutic efficacy versus cost. This really frustrates me! As a consequence, we spend billions on health care without a real clue as to what does and doesn't work, what saves money or creates great outcomes. A single-payer system would be far more able to do this, but then there are the political issues with this... So we spend and spend and wonder what works.

Bruce adds:

Your question is a very good one and it is frustrating that there is no way to answer it. By the lack of a databank for such information we simply say stuff like, "Here is what I do and it works." Unfortunately, that is not science, and it is the same sort of approach that allowed bleeding to be the treatment for TB (tuberculosis) in the 1700's.

Aquatic therapy has a history that extends through all of recorded civilization, but the science behind it does not extend beyond the mid 20th century. I would love for you to have the tools that allowed an evidence-based approach to the treatment of your patients. You are motivated, your patients are in need, and we all wish for better outcomes.

There is no organization beyond NSPF (National Swimming Pool Foundation) that formally has an agenda to promote the science of aquatic activity. That is tragic, IMHO (in my humble opinion). But it is better to have at least one organization than none. So hang in there and stay tuned as the science emerges, Megan.

Fran writes:

As a former Arthritis Foundation Trainer, I can honestly say that having a national organization behind you with their data and research boards would greatly help your cause. Call of go to your local AF (Arthritis Foundation) website. Talk to someone there who coordinates the trainers because she or he will have the documentation you are seeking. While there are no set protocols or schedules for "when, how and for how long" carved in stone, good solid information is available to back up the fact(s) that aquatic exercise is beneficial for joint replacement patients and clients in rebuilding strength, ROM (range of motion), balance and stability.