

# Innovative group approach to knee rehabilitation after surgery

A change in the way rehabilitation is provided for knee replacement patients has led to innovation and excellence in a new program at the Wellness Institute Clinic.

Last year the Manitoba Government moved outpatient physiotherapy from hospital to private-practice providers. As the operator of a private physiotherapy clinic associated with a hospital, the Wellness Institute took a serious look at what it could do to fill the gaps and realized it had a terrific opportunity to make a difference.

The result is a unique program for individual knee rehabilitation after surgery – in a supportive group setting. Intake is continuous to one of three “classes” on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and patients typically attend twice a week for 8-10 sessions.

Patients need to consciously rehabilitate their knee after surgery because scar tissue will thicken to limit their ability to bend their knee if it is not stretched early on. Fear of opening the wound and pain make patients reluctant to do this. If range of motion is not achieved early it may mean a trip back to the hospital for manipulation under anesthetic.

The program blends the best of the former hospital group with individual treatment under the direction of Senior Physiotherapist Dorotea Cassels, who led some of the first knee classes in Winnipeg at Grace Hospital two decades ago and who has also worked in the Wellness clinic for many years.



“Class’ is a bit of a misnomer because it’s really one-on-one treatment, but within a group. If you had knee rehab with one physiotherapist you’d get the same thing, but you wouldn’t have the other people around and you wouldn’t have the constant supervision with two physiotherapists and a rehab assistant,” Cassels said.

That’s echoed by participant Pat Manson, 64.

“You hear where everyone else is at ... when others are being kept awake at night ... or you hear how people have progressed and the little tricks that helped them,” she said.

Pat recently graduated from the program at Wellness Institute after her second knee replacement. Even though she understands what she is supposed to do to recover mobility in her knee and get stronger, she believes the support she received in the program is critical to her successful recovery.

“I was so grateful for that; they’re with you and they support you. It keeps you honest. You’re forced to do (the exercises) in the class. At home you don’t have the equipment and there isn’t someone to make sure you’re doing it properly. You have to push yourself to get the benefit,” she said.

Wellness started the program after consulting with the regional Surgery Program, visiting existing hospital-based programs at Grace, Seven Oaks and Concordia hospitals, and researching best practices. Cassels and physiotherapist Kerry St. George put together the best of the best. Over 70 patients have successfully completed their rehab since November, and another 35 are in progress now.

Cost is a consideration for some, but many, like Pat Manson, have extended coverage that covers part of the cost. In her case Blue Cross covered 75% of the fees.

Having a group setting helps to keep the costs lower and accessible to more people and gets more patients through their rehab process, but it also does something else very interesting and supportive for healing.

“People love the camaraderie, the social aspect. Most are home alone and here they get to see the same faces and compare notes, validating a normal recovery that might include pain or sleep issues, and when you see you’re not alone it helps you to get through it,” Cassels said. 

## Helping you to connect with your community hospital:



SEVEN OAKS  
GENERAL HOSPITAL  
FOUNDATION



sogh.ca | @sevenoakswpg



wellnessinstitute.ca | @WellnessSOGH



changinghealthcaredelivery.ca | @SevenOaksCDIC

**Your donation will make a difference.** Your gift to the Foundation will build on public funding by supporting enhancements and patient care that otherwise would not be possible. To donate, call **204-632-3552**, visit **sogh.ca/foundation** or complete the enclosed card. Thank you for your support.

## YES. Here is my gift to support the hospital.

### ENCLOSED IS MY GIFT OF:

- \$50    \$75    \$100    \$250    \$ .....
- My cheque is attached    Please charge my credit card
- Visa    MasterCard

.....  
Credit card number

.....  
Expiry date

.....  
Signature

.....  
CSV #

### I'D LIKE TO DIRECT MY GIFT TO:

- The highest priorities and greatest needs
- Other (please specify) .....

**Please make cheque payable to:** Seven Oaks General Hospital Foundation

- Please e-mail my official tax receipt

.....  
Email

.....  
Phone