

Review

Additional techniques benefit patients

Functional electrical stimulation improves functionality



Occupational therapist, Alison Camp applying FES to patient, Shameer Patchappa to help improve his grasp.

FES involves electrical stimulation to assist with muscle training and improving functional activities. Conditions benefiting from FES include, amongst others, stroke, multiple sclerosis, head and spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy and Parkinson's disease.

The use of FES has been proven to enhance walking patterns of patients who have abnormal gait, helping in the prevention of falls by normalising the gait pattern through electrical stimulation of the muscles involved in walking. It can also

be used for the upper limb to prevent shoulder subluxation in stroke patients, thereby reducing pain and increasing function. FES can further be applied to strengthen functional tenodesis grasp in both stroke and tetraplegic patients.

In-service training of therapy staff at the unit has been completed, and the use of the machines is supervised during patient treatment sessions. Positive results have already been observed during treatment, particularly with regards to a decrease in shoulder pain experienced by patients and an increase in awareness of the affected limb. An additional benefit is the visible normalisation of tone which encourages functional movement. FES will be introduced in all of the Life Rehabilitation units in the near future.

To ensure that patients benefit from the latest technology, Life Entabeni's rehabilitation unit has introduced functional electrical stimulation (FES).

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Baclofen for patients with severe spasms and pain

Life Eugene Marais' rehabilitation unit has joined the elite international group of rehabilitation units pioneering advanced technology through the use of the Baclofen intrathecal drug delivery system to manage severe spinal spasms. The unit has paved the way for other Life Rehabilitation units to follow, by adding this powerful system to its range of medical interventions and care modalities.

The device, usually implanted under the skin in the lower abdominal wall or in the buttock, with a catheter implanted intrathecally, is connected to a programmable pump. The system is used in neurological intervention to provide

effective pain relief for chronic neuropathic pain and also as a vehicle to deliver Baclofen for the treatment of severe spasms. It is administered in cases where conventional treatment for spasms has proved ineffectual. Patients are carefully evaluated through an in-depth assessment, followed by a trial screening test done by a neurosurgeon, to establish their suitability for the implant.

The new technologically advanced product has strongly positioned Life Eugene Marais' rehabilitation unit at the forefront of spinal treatment, emphasising



Rehabilitation doctor, Anna Marx (right) implanting an intrathecal Baclofen pump, assisted by rehabilitation practice manager, Janet Swarts.

the facility's ultra modern medical equipment and complementary solutions to support its focus on relief of suffering and enhancing quality of life.

Structured TBI programme proves beneficial for patients

Life Riverfield Lodge has recognised the need for a more structured rehabilitation programme for traumatic brain injury (TBI) patients. Speech and language therapist, Sulice Pietersen, and neuropsychologist, Rolene Hovsha, conducted the necessary research to identify the needs of the programme, and then developed a strategy to ensure the successful implementation and management of this initiative.

The objectives of the programme include reducing the patients' length of stay and therefore the rehabilitation costs, and achieving improved functional outcomes together with all the social

benefits of a group environment. The basic principles underlying this programme involve a regular routine in a structured environment, the concept of apprenticeship and fostering a sense of belonging.

Every patient in the programme is provided with a timetable on a weekly basis, and patients are linked to 'mentor' each other in their compliance with participation in the programme. Simple aids have been introduced in the ward to direct the patients, and colourful orientation boards assist in ensuring that patients are well orientated. A group programme is run every day, where

different topics are addressed. These topics include current events, social support, education groups, feedback on daily events, cognitive groups and planning the week.

The TBI programme was started in July and has been running with great success since then. An improvement in patient outcomes has already been noticed, demonstrating strong benefit resulting from the more structured environment.

Follow-up research is currently being conducted to formally document the benefits of this TBI programme.

Seventh Life Rehabilitation unit opened

East London based unit services Border region

On 1 October, Life Rehabilitation added a seventh unit to its national network of private rehabilitation facilities, by opening a specially designed unit at Life St Dominic's Hospital in East London. This entry into the Border region is a step towards realising Life Rehabilitation's aim of national expansion to meet the demand for acute rehabilitation services across the country.

Therapists in the region were given the opportunity to view the new facilities at a preview event, so that they could



Permanent, fixed term and sessional interdisciplinary team members attended an induction programme prior to the new unit's opening, to help prepare them for the challenge of running the new service. Kathy Wundram, acting national rehabilitation manager, and Nina Strydom, rehabilitation standards manager, did the induction.

familiarise themselves with the optimal rehabilitation opportunities which have now become available to their patients.

In line with Life Rehabilitation's expertise in trauma and neurological disability management, the new 16-bed unit offers acute in-patient rehabilitation to patients who have suffered severe neurological trauma, including spinal cord injuries, stroke and traumatic brain injuries. Patients with complex medical, neurological or orthopaedic conditions, which would benefit from intensive rehabilitation, also qualify for admission.

Additional beds at Life Pasteur well utilised

To accommodate the growing need for acute rehabilitation in the Free State, Life Pasteur's rehabilitation unit expanded with 12 new beds, enabling the unit to accommodate a total of 27 patients. The opening of the wing housing the additional beds was celebrated by referring doctors and staff at an informal breakfast function held in August. The added capacity is aligned with the unit's expansion strategy, and the need for this expansion is borne out by high occupancies in all the beds since the opening.

Here, Life Pasteur's growing interdisciplinary rehabilitation team is pictured in the new gym facility.



High activity in educating practitioners in neurological rehabilitation

The last couple of months have seen high levels of activity in continuing professional development activities offered at Life Rehabilitation units. Many events have been run across the country, with increasing levels of interest from the rehabilitation community, providing numerous opportunities for knowledge expansion, skills growth, discussion and networking within the field of neurological rehabilitation.

Sexuality in disability workshop

Life Entabeni Hospital hosted a Southern African Spinal Cord Association (SASCA) workshop on sexuality in disability, at which renowned clinical counsellor and sexologist, Willem Stiglingh, provided a greater understanding of the impact of a disabling event on a person's sexuality. He emphasised the imperative role of the different rehabilitation professionals in addressing this sensitive aspect during the rehabilitation phase of recovery.

Neurological techniques for upper limb disability



Dr Hugh Staub, rehabilitation doctor and neurologist at Life Entabeni, administers Botox® to patient Shameer Patchappa.

Life Entabeni's rehabilitation unit hosted a full-day workshop on electrical stimulation and splinting for the upper limb.

This workshop was presented by experienced occupational therapist, Gillian Coetsee and it provided the opportunity for both occupational and physiotherapists to learn practical techniques based on Rood and Brunnstrom principles. They also had the opportunity to apply splinting techniques on selected patients.

Neurologist, Dr Hugh Staub was a guest speaker at the event, presenting updated information on the application of Botox® and its role in the treatment of upper limb spasticity.



Gillian Coetsee (right) teaching splinting techniques to therapists Nirodh Sinanin (centre) and Bhavika Vallabh (left).

Assessment and management of voice problems

A 90 minute workshop to educate the healthcare community on the assessment and management of voice problems was recently run at Life Entabeni Hospital. Louise van Loren, a speech and language pathologist currently completing her MA, presented specialised insights on the topic. Voice problems are some of the most commonly neglected speech deficits.

Speech breathing and voicing intervention

A full-day workshop on speech breathing and voicing intervention in adults with neurological conditions was held at Life Entabeni, providing 17 speech and language therapists in the region the opportunity to get abreast of the latest developments and improve their competence in this field. The workshop was presented by Rina van der Walt (pictured right), one of the few speech and language therapists who is also a neuro-developmental therapy (NDT) instructor. Rina will also be presenting this workshop in Gauteng at Life New Kensington's rehabilitation unit on 17 November. Anyone interested in attending can contact Jenny Pillay on 011 614 7125 or e-mail her at jenny.pillay@lifehealthcare.co.za.



Seating for neurological disability

Life New Kensington Clinic hosted a three-day workshop on seating for neurological disability, to educate therapists on appropriate wheelchair selection and the importance of correct seating positions for long term quality of life and independence.

Elsje Scheffler, a physiotherapist currently working at the Western Cape Rehabilitation Centre and an expert in the field, presented the workshop which included lectures, hands-on practical demonstrations and case studies.

Outcomes measures

Life St Dominic's Hospital hosted their first rehabilitation CPD to 25 therapists from the Eastern Cape region. Presented by Kathy Wundram, acting national rehabilitation manager and Nina Strydom, rehabilitation standards manager, the CPD covered Life Rehabilitation's approach to outcomes measurement and benchmarking of findings against those achieved by similar units across the world.

Psychologists – key in helping to rebuild lives

Rehabilitation is a comprehensive process, involving both the recovery of physical function, and building of the support structure provided to the patient and family during this traumatic time.

The psychologist is key in rebuilding lives temporarily shattered by the impact of disability, and invaluable in providing education and answers, both to families and to staff. Counselling a person grappling with readjustment to life after disability, to empower him mentally and emotionally, is intrinsic to a successful outcome.

Our psychologists' involvement in the recovery process includes the screening of brain-injured patients for cognitive dysfunction, guidance of the rehabilitation team on expectations for behavioural changes resulting from brain injury, and providing supportive counselling and therapy for traumatised patients. Our psychologists work within the framework of neuropsychology, which aims to understand the specific impact of a brain injury on cognitive and behavioural function of a patient. With these problems not always being evident, it takes specialist knowledge and skills to prepare the patient and his family for the questions and inevitable misunderstandings with which they are likely to be faced. For this reason, each of the Life Rehabilitation units utilises the expertise of a psychologist to ensure that patients and their families are adequately supported.



Romy Perkins – Life Entabeni

Romy is a clinical psychologist interested in the effects of psychological trauma, social support and adjustment.



Eide Francke – Life Little Company of Mary

Eide is a clinical psychologist and has been involved in neuropsychological assessment and rehabilitation since 2005.



Rolene Hovsha – Life Riverfield Lodge

Rolene is a clinical psychologist with local and Australian experience in managing patients presenting with brain dysfunction resulting from neurological injury.



Diaan Bisogno – Life New Kensington Clinic

Diaan is a qualified social worker and clinical psychologist. Her work interests include trauma, bereavement and loss counselling.



Bev Van Zyl – Life New Kensington Clinic

Bev is currently doing her PhD in the field of neuropsychology. She has enormous experience in managing brain-injured patients.



Sonja Wright – Life Eugene Marais

Sonja is a clinical psychologist and has a specific interest in trauma counselling which she developed in many practice settings.



Ben Janecke – Life Pasteur

Ben developed the neuropsychology service at the Life Pasteur rehabilitation unit over the past six years.

First OTA in SA to pass OTT conversion exam



Lesley Vezi, occupational therapy assistant (OTA) at Life Entabeni Hospital, was recently notified that he was successful in passing his occupational therapy technician conversion exam, the first OTA in South Africa to do so.

The programme of conversion is in line with the initiative put into place by the HPCSA, as an upgrade of skills and responsibility for OTAs.

We are very proud to have Lesley's excellence in service delivery as part of our collective expertise.

National nursing meeting facilitates networking

Optimal service delivery across all rehabilitation units was high on the agenda during the national nursing meeting held in August at Life Healthcare's head office in Illovo. The rehabilitation nursing unit managers, from around the country, had the opportunity to discuss rehabilitation-specific nursing documentation, share expertise and set future plans to address nursing issues unique to rehabilitation.

Myra Sparks, nursing services specialist, added valuable input on quality service delivery with her informative presentation on ISO 9001 compliance and trends analysis.

The strength of our network is evident in these national meetings, where the implementation of best operating practices across the various units are workshopped to ensure optimal patient care.



Attending the meeting were, from left, back: Jean Butler, marketing and nursing manager, Life New Kensington; Mirriam Legodi, 2IC at Life Little Company of Mary's unit; Janet Swarts, practice manager, Life Eugene Marais; Mariska Phillips, acting standards manager, Life Rehabilitation; and Muzi Masina, nursing unit manager, Life Riverfield Lodge. Front: Nelia Fourie, nursing unit manager, Life Pasteur; Anmarie Muller, nursing unit manager, Life Little Company of Mary; Nashira Cevikmen, nursing unit manager, Life New Kensington; and Maggie Joubert, nursing services coordinator, Life Eugene Marais.

Research highlights post-discharge accessibility challenges

As part of the rehabilitation process, patients and their families are encouraged to spend time together in public places to facilitate community reintegration and interpersonal relationships within the family. Feedback obtained by Life Pasteur's unit, however, indicated disappointment and frustration with the lack of accessibility in some of the restaurants in Bloemfontein.

To address this matter, the rehabilitation team enlisted the help of the University of the Free State, and a group of fourth year OT students chose the topic as their final year research study.

The group set out to develop a profiling system which would indicate accessibility levels of restaurants in the Mangaung district. The first step was to establish the needs of spinal cord injured persons regarding accessibility of restaurants. The Association for the Physically Disabled (APD) and Life Pasteur's rehabilitation unit each contacted 50 clients on behalf of the researchers and those who gave permission were then contacted by the researchers to complete a questionnaire.

A total of 88.9 % of all participants reported that they visited restaurants before their injury, while 90% of them indicated a change in the frequency of their visits after their injury – the majority going to restaurants less often, influenced by the lack of accessibility. It has been determined that physical barriers pose a



From left, back: OT students, Sylvia Chakalane, Leandri Marx, Danette de Villiers (study leader), Fay Carver and Marianne Teubes. Front: Corien Jahng, Elzandrie Barkhuizen and Corina Botha (clinical mentor and therapy unit manager at Life Pasteur).

far greater problem than social barriers, and the research will lay the foundation for implementing a profiling system for restaurants in the region.

Hospitality attendant training project recognised at congress

Life Entabeni's rehabilitation unit enjoyed national recognition for the best poster presentation at the joint congress of the Southern African Spinal Cord Association (SASCA) and the Southern African Neurological Rehabilitation Association (SANRA), held in Durban during September.

The poster presentation was titled *Investing in our most valuable asset: a training programme for hospitality attendants with an elective in rehabilitation*.

The poster described the programme currently being implemented in Life Rehabilitation units across the country.



The winning poster's project team from Life Entabeni Hospital, left to right are, Dusti Robertson, therapy services coordinator, Ashika Kaliyan, nursing services coordinator, Nina Strydom, rehabilitation standards manager (national office) and Kerry-Anne Dolloway, dietician.

Therapy dogs wow senior citizens

As part of Northcliff's Circle of Friends Women's Day celebrations, Life New Kensington Clinic was invited to do a presentation on the use of therapy dogs in a rehabilitation environment. Charlene Kruger, manager of the therapy dogs, Ben and Bobby, did the presentation, with the dogs in attendance.

The impact of the therapy dogs was once again illustrated when a man recently diagnosed with dementia and demonstrating extreme reluctance to participate in any event, spontaneously came to the front to interact actively with the dogs.



Charlene Kruger facilitating the dogs' interaction with the senior citizens.

Disabled riders meet quad bike challenge head on



The Quads4Quads race, one of the QuadPara Association of South Africa's (QASA) principal annual fundraising events, was completed by a large group of quad bike riders who tackled the challenging off-road route from Johannesburg to Durban, and back again, in September.

Ari Seirlis, director of QASA, who competed in the race for the second time, and Jakkie Pieters, chairperson of QASA, who was sponsored by Life Rehabilitation, were tracked

carefully by our teams during their incredible physical feat. Jakkie was given a send off in Ballito by members of Life Entabeni's rehabilitation unit for his leg of the ride, and welcomed by members of the Life Little Company of Mary and Life New Kensington Clinic teams on his arrival in Brakpan. He was very excited about the race which ran over four days, and his strong ride proved to be inspiring for all who witnessed it.



Life Little Company of Mary team members, from left: Dr Sammy du Preez, rehabilitation doctor; Nikki de Beer, therapy services coordinator; Anel Swanepoel, dietitian; Eidge Francke, psychologist; Selina Chauke, social worker; and Jonelia Theron, speech therapist welcoming Jakkie after he completed the race.

Life New Kensington staff 'Walk the Talk'



Life New Kensington Clinic took to the streets of Johannesburg in July in the annual 702 Walk the Talk, the biggest event of its kind in the world. Staff members and their families (including their dogs), dusted off their most comfortable walking shoes along with 38 000 other walkers.

The day got off to a very early, cold start. Marketing and nursing manager, Jean Butler and her helper, Paige Kruger, were at the venue before sunrise, setting up the Life Rehabilitation site. As the weary walkers and runners returned, proudly clutching their medals in sweaty palms, Jean and Paige were welcoming them with refreshments. Pictured above are some of the Life New Kensington participants.

Racing is for the birds



From left to right, Frank Kruger, chairman of Ashley Village, Fran Rapson and Sharon Rawlins, both rehabilitation admissions consultants at Life Entabeni, and Sharon's daughter, Sarah watching the pigeons line up to be clocked home at the finish. (Photo courtesy of Caxton newspapers' Berea Mail and Queensburgh News).

Earlier this year the QuadPara Association in KwaZulu-Natal hosted their second corporate pigeon race. Approached for a sponsorship, Leanne Arlow, rehabilitation practice manager at Life Entabeni's unit, put her characteristic energy into raising sufficient funds to sponsor the birds, resulting in the rehabilitation team and management each sponsoring a racing pigeon.

The pigeons were raced 150km, from Ladysmith Ultra City to Ashley Village (a QuadPara self-help home) in Pinetown. All funds raised will be utilised to support various projects of the association, which urgently needs funding to maintain and increase its extended outreach services to the many needy quadriplegics and paraplegics throughout the province.

Top wheelchair rally honours for rehab staff



From left, back: Elize van Eck of the organising committee; Elisna Bredenkamp, OT; Corina Botha, UMT; Wentzel Jansen, therapy assistant; and Reinet van den Berg, OT – all from the rehabilitation unit at Life Pasteur. Front: Elzandrie Barkhuizen and Elma Heyns, both of the organising committee.

Life Rehabilitation's involvement in the disabled community extends to social activities for the disabled, as illustrated by Life Pasteur's entry in a recent wheelchair rally.

The occupational therapy student committee of the University of the Free State hosted its annual wheelchair rally in Bloemfontein in August. This event has been instrumental in raising awareness of the challenges wheelchair users are confronted with on a daily basis, especially accessibility.

The Life Rehabilitation team delivered a stellar performance and won the prize for the fastest team on the obstacle course, while rehabilitation caregiver, Wentzel Jansen and occupational therapist, Elisna Bredenkamp won the first prize in their respective categories.

Rehab units active during Stroke Awareness Week

With stroke being one of the leading causes of disability, and comprehensive stroke rehabilitation an integral part of Life Rehabilitation's services, the units were actively involved in raising awareness of this debilitating condition during Stroke Awareness Week in September.

Life Entabeni's unit set up a stand at a local shopping centre and offered the public free blood pressure screening, blood glucose monitoring, dietary advice and information on the prevention of stroke, and showcased its services and products, including assistive devices. The response was overwhelming, with some 250 people



Some of the team members, patients and guest speakers at the Life Pasteur event.

using the opportunity to get screened in just over three hours.

Life Pasteur's unit adopted the theme, 'Life after stroke' for its awareness day activities. Stroke patients and their

families joined the rehabilitation team members for an informative session where their respective roles in the rehabilitation process were explained.

Three former patients at Life Pasteur's rehabilitation unit, Tat Botha, Marie Zeeman and Ernest Joubert shared their personal experiences of stroke and their rehabilitation and recovery. They testified to the quality of life that they are experiencing and provided practical tips on how to travel along the tough road ahead. The patients really connected with the former patients and used the time to learn from them and to share their own experiences.

Rehab patients excel in fun run/walk

As part of its community involvement, Life Entabeni Hospital sponsored a community fun run/walk in Glenwood in September and was given naming rights for the race. The 'Life Entabeni Hospital Fun Run & Walk' formed part of 40 cultural events in the greater Durban area during Heritage Month, with the funds raised going towards upgrading the Glenwood district, and was well supported by the community, both old and young.

Life Entabeni's rehabilitation unit entered three patients with disabilities, who were supported by assistants during the race. The entrants, Makhosi Thwala, Magnificent Hlengwa, and Mbokotela Phokola secured the first, second and third places respectively in the disabled category. Pictured below are the winning trio (front row) with their supporters from Life Entabeni.



Kind gesture changes boy's life

Life changed for Nathaniel Iverson, a four year-old boy with Guillain-Barre Syndrome, when a fellow patient at Life New Kensington Clinic arranged financial support from Sandoz towards a new wheelchair. The good Samaritan realised that the young boy's quality of life would be seriously compromised by his family's inability to purchase an appropriate wheelchair, and wasted no time in securing assistance to change that.

From a wheelchair to a tandem

Four years ago, George Rex could have been described as an outdoor adrenaline junkie who actively trained in karate and enjoyed taking part in scuba-diving, abseiling and cycling events in his free time. At his workplace he lead adventure teambuilding courses, including river rafting and rock climbing, which qualified him as an extremely active man in peak physical condition.

However, this picture changed drastically in November 2003 when he had a stroke – an artery in his shoulder tore and caused an estimated eight emboli to enter his brain resulting in a cerebellar infarct. After six weeks in ICU, George was transferred to Life Riverfield Lodge's rehabilitation unit, which became his home for the next three months.

"At first, I was strapped to a wheelchair to help me maintain my sitting balance, my neck was stiff and my arm movements were uncoordinated. My weakness was generalised, my balance badly affected and my communication very limited. There were numerous challenges and obstacles during my time in rehabilitation, but with the guidance of the therapists and support of my family, we attempted each of these at intervals." One of the seemingly impossible goals George set for himself



George Rex (left) with his fellow cyclist, Johan Squires after completing the 2007 Pick 'n Pay Argus Cycle Race.

was to complete the 2007 Pick 'n Pay Argus Cycle Race. What started out on an exercise bicycle at the rehabilitation centre, progressed to a spinning cycle at the gym and ended with George crossing the Argus' finishing line on a tandem.

George developed from someone who could only turn in his bed with support, to someone who has completed the Argus, and is now planning to race in the 94.7 Cycle Challenge. His life reflects the story of one man's focused determination, and the unconditional support of his family and friends who have helped make this journey possible.

'In sickness and in health'



Anna-Marie and Anton on their wedding day.

Two of the patients at Life Pasteur's rehabilitation unit celebrated happy events in the last few months.

Anton Weihman, who suffered a T1 spinal cord injury in a motor vehicle accident, married Anna-Marie Esterhuizen in July.

Dr Ambrosius Swartbooi, who sustained a C6 spinal cord injury in a motor vehicle accident, got engaged to Susan Morgan. We are truly happy that they found happiness after tragedy.

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