

## CNI NeuroHealth Center

Roz Davis, MS / SLP and Carol Greenwald, MD

*The Colorado Neurological Institute believes that recovery can continue for many years after a stroke, but we are also aware that the risk of a stroke is higher in people who have already suffered one. For this reason, the CNI NeuroHealth Center puts great emphasis on secondary prevention. We provide public education on stroke risk factors, risk factor modification, stroke symptoms, and the need to seek immediate medical attention, should symptoms occur.*

**Introduction.** A major problem with the rehabilitation of stroke patients is this: “What happens to those who have no insurance or those needing further therapy after their insurance benefits have been exhausted?” This problem was quite familiar to Spalding Rehabilitation Hospital and the Spalding Community Foundation. Luanne Williams, the Executive Director of CNI, envisioned a solution. With the aid of the Spalding Community Foundation, Luanne’s vision has become a reality. In April of 2004 the CNI was awarded a grant to provide rehabilitation for uninsured and underinsured patients. The doors of the CNI NeuroHealth Center opened in October of that year. Under the direction of Roz Davis, the Center offers physical, occupational, and speech therapy to qualified patients.

There is a widespread belief that stroke patients reach maximum recovery within three to six months, and that no further gains can be made thereafter. The 11 therapists employed by our Center have many years of specialized experience in treating neurologically impaired patients. None of them agree with this conventional wisdom. The philosophy of the group was articulated by occupational therapist,

Juliann Hanson-Zlatev, in a statement that hangs, framed, in Center’s reception area: “There is NO statute of limitation for stroke recovery.”

In 2005, the Spalding Community Foundation and HealthONE Alliance awarded a second grant to the NeuroHealth Center, to continue our work and to allow provision of additional services. The Center’s patients may now receive assistance from a licensed social worker and a neuropsychologist. We also offer scholarships for driving evaluations, conducted at Spalding Rehabilitation Hospital, and we provide equipment such as walkers, braces and splints to those who are unable to afford them. Neuro-ophthalmology examinations and therapeutic massage have also been added to our services.

It is our firm collective opinion that these services allow patients to make genuine progress in neurological function and improvement in quality of life, long after they were presumed to have “maxed out” in terms of their recovery. The following information is general and anecdotal, but we plan to present a more formal analysis of our experience in the near future.

Patients in our program range in age from 12 to 91 years. Many of them are non-



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*Carol Greenwald, MD, is in charge of protocol development and is research manager at the Colorado Neurological Institute. She is Coordinator of the Stroke Education and Outreach Program and participates in many venues to raise awareness about the symptoms and risk factors associated with stroke.*

English speaking, but with the help of family members, their rehabilitation progress has been encouraging. Our youngest stroke patient, a 12 year old boy, to whom we will refer as “K”, remained severely impaired after exhausting all his rehabilitation benefits. His mom is enthusiastic about the progress K has made since coming to the Center. She says, “He couldn’t walk unsupported, and now he can; he had no wrist movement, and now he does; he is starting to grasp with his affected hand.” Further, she rates the therapists as “caring, supportive and kind — they know how to make therapy fun.” As of January 2006, K is back in school full time. He wears jeans instead of sweat pants because now he can manage the snaps and zippers with his affected hand. He continues in therapy at the Center, with goals of riding his bike by summer, and of going fishing.

A patient in her 70s suffered a severe stroke 2 years ago. Her insurance was depleted. When she started working with our therapist, she was wheelchair bound. After 3 months, she is walking outside with a cane and is largely independent in her personal care.

We believe that recovery can continue for many years after a stroke, but we are also aware that the risk of a stroke is higher in people who have already suffered one. For this reason, our Center puts great emphasis on secondary prevention. We provide public education on stroke risk factors, risk factor modification, stroke symptoms, and the need to seek immediate medical attention, should symptoms occur. In 2005, we reached over 5,000 people through participation in screenings and health fairs. We conducted detailed individual stroke risk assessments on 1,000 people.

Our Center is actively involved in stroke rehabilitation research, as well. Our

most exciting project is a ground-breaking study that investigates the potential of electrical stimulation of the brain as a facilitator of the “remodeling” that accounts for much of one’s functional recovery from stroke. The study is sponsored by Northstar Neuroscience. CNI, in affiliation with Swedish Medical Center, is one of 18 sites in the United States and Canada. We are honored to be the only participating non-university-based institution. Individuals who have questions about the study and those who are interested in participating should please contact the Center at 1 (888) 546-9779.

Groups desiring an educational presentation from the Center are welcome to direct inquiries to Roz Davis at (303) 806-7421. For questions about the available services and potential eligibility please contact us at (303) 597-1724.

The work of the NeuroHealth Center continues through the generous support of the Spalding Community Foundation and the HealthONE Alliance. We thank them for their support.

*Address comments and questions to:*

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