

Summer 2013

NoLimits



JOHNSON
REHABILITATION
INSTITUTE

Community Newsletter from the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute

A photograph of two men standing on a set of outdoor concrete stairs. The man on the left is wearing a blue polo shirt, khaki shorts, and a prosthetic left leg. The man on the right is wearing a dark suit and tie. They are both smiling. The background shows green foliage and a clear sky.

Team Effort Gets Patient *Back on Track*

PLUS:

**JFK Builds Confidence
and Opens Doors
for Local Youth**

Finding Your Voice Again

**U.S. News & World Report
Names JRI among the
Best in Rehabilitation
Hospitals in the Nation**

and more....

**BEST
HOSPITALS**

U.S. News
& WORLD REPORT

**NATIONAL
REHABILITATION
2013-14**

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A Note From Our Medical Director

Welcome to the Summer Issue of *No Limits* – the community newsletter from the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute (JRI). I am pleased to share with you some exciting news. The Johnson Rehabilitation Institute has been ranked as one of the best hospitals in the nation for 2013-14 in Rehabilitation by *U.S. News and World Report*. The annual rankings recognize hospitals that excel in treating the most challenging patients.

This is a great honor and an opportunity to acknowledge our entire staff of clinicians and support staff who provide cutting edge, compassionate care to inpatients and outpatients every day. It is our teams' determination, commitment to excellence and visionary spirit that earns JRI this ranking which is shared with only three percent of all hospitals who earn a national ranking in any specialty. It is with great pride and admiration that I congratulate this wonderful team that I have the privilege of working with.

This issue of *No Limits* will introduce you to a number of the rehabilitation services available at JRI through the triumphs of some of the individuals who have benefited from our services, and the team of exceptional professionals that helped them reach their goals.

You will meet Gerry McDonald, who with the help of Heikki Uustal, MD, and the entire Prosthetics and Orthotics team, not only returned to independence after losing his leg but also found a new passion playing golf!

You will also learn about our certified hand therapist, Kim Conti, OTR, CHT, who both mentors her team and treats her patients with cutting edge techniques, helping individuals such as Joyce Talarico regain and retain the use of their hands following injury or surgery. And our Speech Pathology team who helped restore a singer's voice after surgery.

Did you know that JRI has an outpatient location in Metuchen? The Center provides physical therapy as well as aquatic therapy. Read about how one member of our community found that aquatic therapy helped her regain function and an active lifestyle in spite of her diagnosis of fibromyalgia.

So as the summer ends and you begin to think about getting back into your routine this fall, the expert team at JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is here for you. We look forward to continuing to enhance the lives of our patients for many years to come.

Yours in Good Health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Strax'.

Thomas Strax, MD

Vice President & Medical Director
JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute

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JRI Department Phone Numbers

Admissions	732-321-7733	Pediatric Rehabilitation	732-548-7610
Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation.....	732-321-7722	Physical/Occupational Therapies	732-321-7056
Cognitive Rehabilitation	732-906-2640	Prosthetic & Orthotic Lab	732-248-0774
Day Rehabilitation.....	732-321-7707	Rehabilitation Physicians	732-321-7070
Driver's Training	732-321-7056	Speech Pathology &	732-321-7063
Health & Fitness Center.....	732-632-1610	Audiology*/Hearing Aids	
Outpatient Center at Metuchen.....	732-548-9800	Vocational Rehabilitation	732-321-7069
Outpatient Center at Monroe	609-409-1170	Pelvic Floor Therapy	732-321-7056
Pain Management.....	732-321-7070		

JFK BUILDS CONFIDENCE

AND OPENS DOORS FOR LOCAL YOUTH

If you're a parent of a young adult who has special needs, the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute, Harriet P. Findlay Career Development Program is available to provide a 'transition to work' opportunity. Students can improve their communication skills, work effectively, live more independently within their community and provide you peace of mind. The program helps to identify the student's vocational interests, abilities, and aptitudes. It can also foster skills for continuing education. Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Licensed Occupational Therapists work with each student to help assess their career options and set goals that give each individual a sense of pride.

Students are provided the opportunity to visit local businesses to learn what jobs may exist. The Program also hosts a Career Options Day where dozens of businesses can come to JFK and students can meet potential employers face-to-face and discuss requirements and opportunities within those organizations.

At age 18, Dennis was referred to JFK by the Woodbridge Board of Education Career Development Program. He lives with spina bifida, and uses a motorized wheelchair. Although Dennis has overcome many challenges, JFK's Career Development Program has been the gateway to both work and social opportunity for him.

Dennis has had the opportunity to work as a greeter at the Information Desk where he welcomed visitors, escorted them to various locations in the hospital and delivered patient mail. Dennis also participated in a computer application

training program, administered by the Vocational Rehabilitation Department where he studied the Microsoft Office Suite. When he completed the course he earned a Certificate from Union County College of Continuing Education in Microsoft Word.

Before the Program, Dennis never traveled independently. He was always accompanied by an adult. As his independence continued to grow, he traveled by school bus without an aide, then he secured Access Link services, a shadow public transportation system, which he uses several times per week to get to the gym and to his job.

During his final year in the Career Development Program, Dennis was able to transfer the skills that he developed at JFK to a volunteer role at the Alliance Center for Independence in Edison where he helped prepare mailings, create posters and flyers, and operated a



paper shredder. He also worked the telephones answering calls, taking messages, and making reminder calls. Since graduation, Dennis acquired a paid, part-time position at the Woodbridge Township Arena as an admission clerk. He is currently looking for a second job. He also continues to volunteer as a greeter at JFK Medical Center's Information Desk. The Program also allots a social dynamic for students and young adults. Dennis was able to attend Vocational Rehab's Annual Spring Dance and he gets together monthly with his fellow graduates at local restaurants and malls. To learn more about JFK's Vocational Rehabilitation Department and its Career Development Program, call Ellen Kurtz at **732-321-7069** or e-mail ekurtz@jfkhealth.org.

Best Rehabilitation Hospitals in the Nation

JFK Medical Center's Johnson Rehabilitation Institute (JRI) has been ranked as one of the best hospitals in the nation for 2013-14 for Rehabilitation by U.S. News & World Report. The annual U.S. News Best Hospitals rankings, now in their 24th year, recognize hospitals that excel in treating the most challenging patients.

"The JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is unique because we provide the best opportunities for seamless recovery with an innovative team of experts in their field," explains Raymond Fredericks, President and CEO. "Accredited by the Joint Commission and Commission on Accreditation of Facilities (CARF), JFK's unmatched continuum of care assures patients of an integrated, personalized program that facilitates the recovery process."

U.S. News evaluates hospitals in 16 adult specialties. In most specialties, it ranks the nation's top 50 hospitals and recognizes other high-performing hospitals that provide care at nearly the level of their nationally ranked peers.



"A hospital that emerges from our analysis as one of the best has much to be proud of," said Avery Comarow, U.S. News Health Rankings Editor. "Just 3 percent of all hospitals earn a national ranking in any specialty."

U.S. News publishes Best Hospitals to help guide patients who need a high level of care because they face a particularly difficult surgery, a challenging condition, or added risk because of other health problems

or age. Objective measures such as patient survival and safety data, the adequacy of nurse staffing levels and other data largely determined the rankings in most specialties.

The specialty rankings and data were produced for U.S. News by RTI International, a leading research organization based in Research Triangle Park, N.C. Using the same data, U.S. News produced the state and metro rankings.

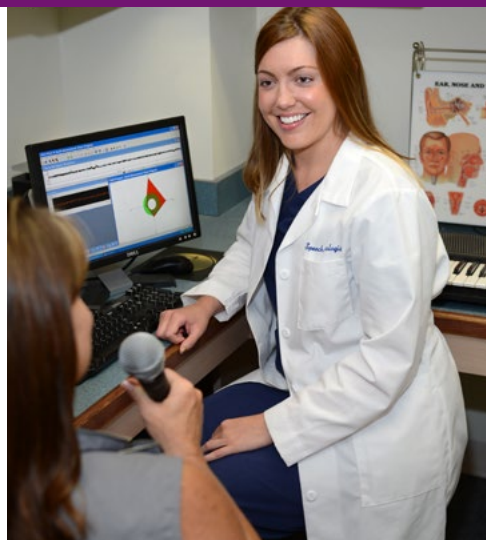
The rankings have been published at <http://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals> and will appear in print in the U.S. News *Best Hospitals* 2014 guidebook.

Finding Your Voice *Again*

Barbara sat in the office of the speech pathologist, her eyes filling with tears as she stated, “music is my life, its part of who I am but I can’t sing anymore.” A woman in her early 40’s, Barbara’s face lit-up when she smiled. She described a vibrant singing career that included years of professional theater, lead singer in a show band, and frequent solo work with her church choir. She stated she had undergone cervical fusion surgery after a car accident, one year prior. Though the surgical scar healed, she noticed that her voice was raspy, hoarse, and it tired out quickly. She assumed that if she kept singing, the problem would go away, but it only got worse. “I use to reach wonderful high notes when I sang,” explains Barbara. I had such power in my voice. But now my voice cracks and I can’t even get the sound out. I’m terrified I will never sing again, and I feel like I’m losing the joy in my life.”

Barbara sought help from an ear, nose and throat doctor (ENT), whose examination revealed significant weakness in the left vocal cord (the structures in the throat that move to make sound). He suspected the weakness was the result of damage to the nerves powering her vocal cords, which occurred during her neck surgery. He told her she would likely never recover full use of her vocal cords, and would not be able to sing again. For Barbara, this news was devastating.

Her doctor thought that a course of voice therapy was one of the only things that might improve her voice and referred Barbara to a speech pathologist, who specializes in voice disorders at the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute (JRI). For most of us, our voice is a part of our body that we take for granted; we use it every day to communicate with our family, friends,



and colleagues. For others, however, their voice is not only their livelihood but their source of fulfillment and identity. With state-of-the-art equipment including videostroboscopy to view vocal cord movement, speech pathologists at JRI often see individuals with voice problems, but some of the most challenging to treat are singers. As the “vocal acrobats” of the musical community, the demands they place on their vocal cords tax even a healthy system, and become almost

impossible when working with vocal cord damage.

Damage to the nerves going into the larynx is a common post-surgical complication with neck and chest operations, but one not frequently discussed with patients prior to surgery. Damage to the nerve can be from localized swelling, being “nicked,” or being severed during surgery. A course of intensive voice therapy can often promote natural healing.

Barbara’s treatment involved four months of sessions. Emphasis was placed on proper breathing, relaxation of both her laryngeal and cervical muscles, and vocal cord strengthening exercises. Modifications were made to both her singing voice and speaking voice to promote healthy use of her vocal cords without increasing tension or strain on her weakened system. The speech pathologist also teamed-up with a physical therapist to reduce the pain and tension in her neck

(Continued on page 6)

Nancy was diagnosed with fibromyalgia five years after she started having symptoms of aching pain in many muscles and joints throughout her body. The pain often changed locations from her shoulders and back to her knees and hips. She had tenderness in the muscles when she pressed on them. Because it was painful to exercise, she became weaker, which led to pain even while doing her daily activities such as cooking, shopping, and attending her son's baseball games.

Nancy's doctor recommended physical therapy and she decided to go to JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Center (JRI) Outpatient Center at Metuchen. There, she received a thorough evaluation which led to a treatment plan designed specifically for her needs and goals. The plan included both land and aquatic therapies. In the warm water of the Center's therapeutic pool, she found that she was able to move with much less effort and pain. In the pool and with the expert guidance of her physical therapist, she was able to practice walking, squatting, and stair climbing. Without the weight-bearing and joint compression she experienced on land, it was possible for her to perform stretching and strengthening exercises including arm, leg and core exercises, as well as aerobic exercises using underwater equipment. After a few weeks of

in the Water

therapy, her pain levels decreased enough that she was able to transition to more traditional land based exercises. She saw improvements in her ability to move with less pain in her everyday life and now enjoys cooking and shopping again. To manage her fibromyalgia symptoms, Nancy continues to attend the Aquatic Maintenance Program at JRI's Outpatient Center at Metuchen. "Aquatic therapy and the team at JRI have been the keys to getting me back to a more active life style," says Nancy. "The ability to participate in the Aquatic Maintenance Program all-year-round is what keeps me functional. I am so grateful that this Center is in my community."

What is Aquatic Physical Therapy?

Aquatic physical therapy uses the unique components of water to assist with the healing process. The buoyancy of the water allows you to exercise with less stress on an injured area, making it easier to move. It also provides resistance to increase strength. It can benefit multiple conditions including: fibromyalgia, arthritis, acute and chronic pain, deconditioning, orthopedic injuries, lymphedema and post-surgical conditions.

What are the benefits of Aquatic Therapy?

- Promotes muscle relaxation
- Decreases pain
- Decreases muscle spasms
- Improves muscle strength



and endurance

- Decreases weight bearing over the submerged joints
- Increases peripheral circulation
- Assists respiratory musculature
- Increases balance

What can you expect at JRI's Aquatic Therapy Program?

- Individualized aquatic exercises in 92 degree temperature
- Functional training activities
- Endurance training with underwater equipment
- Parallel bars for balance and gait training
- Water depth ranging from 3 to 4 feet
- A continued maintenance program for a monthly fee after finishing the therapy program

How can you begin the Aquatic Therapy Program at JRI Metuchen?

Contact your physician for an aquatic physical therapy prescription then call **732-548-9800** for insurance verification and an appointment.

Team Effort Gets Patient

BACK ON TRACK

The professionals at JFK's Johnson Rehabilitation Institute (JRI) took the team approach when treating Gerry McDonald, a 54-year-old construction supervisor from Howell, who suffered an injury when hit by a steel piling in October 2008. The severe damage to his right leg subsequently led to amputation below the right knee. Soon after the amputation, he was transferred to JFK's Johnson Rehabilitation Institute (JRI) to begin his rehabilitation journey.

"Not only did they get me back on track, I am back to doing things that I love like rebuilding engines for dirt 'track' race cars," explains Gerry. "The team at JRI made me feel normal again and even challenged me to pick up golf."

Trying to keep active and seek out challenges, Gerry attended a golf clinic, for amputees, sponsored by the Eastern Amputee Golf Association (EAGA) and the JFK/JRI Prosthetic & Orthotic Team. He was not a golfer but, it spurred his interest and he quickly began to practice his new found sport as well as participate in EAGA sponsored golf tournaments. In fact, he even won an award.

While, at JRI, he was evaluated by members of the Prosthetic & Orthotic team, led by Heikki Uustal, M.D. As an inpatient, Gerry received pre-prosthetic training and the process of shrinking his amputated limb began. That December, Gerry received his preparatory prosthesis. Lou Beaubien, a seasoned Prosthetist with more than 40 years of experience



from the JFK/JRI Prosthetic & Orthotic Lab, fit his initial prosthesis which was essential for learning how to walk with a permanent prosthesis. He started intensive physical therapy sessions with Sue Callaghan, Physical Therapist at the JRI Outpatient Physical Therapy facility. Within weeks he was walking with his prosthesis striving to return to his normal lifestyle. In April 2009, he received his permanent prosthesis which gave him even more mobility and function.

Gerry received a new prosthesis recently with a PROPRIO® Microprocessor FOOT that offers an unprecedented level of mobility and stability for a world that is not flat. The powered ankle motion, intelligent terrain adaptation, and natural function of the PROPRIO FOOT make it one of the most life-like prosthetic feet available. Gerry immediately felt that it was easier to walk and had less low back pain with the new prosthesis.

“The JFK/JRI Prosthetic and Orthotic Lab consistently searches for new technology to assist patients requiring O&P devices,” explains Bob Silvestri, Director. “We acquired the latest OMEGA Scanners, which are non-contact devices for capturing the 3D prosthetic and orthotic shapes of the individual’s affected limb, torso or head. The model is quickly and accurately modified, fabricated, and stored for future reference in the OMEGA CAD software instead of the traditional method of modifying plaster molds by



hand. The CAD/CAM method reduces the time and mess of acquiring patient molds and provides more accurate, consistent results.”

Physiatrist, Dr. Heikki Uustal, a nationally recognized expert in the field of prosthetics and orthotics believes in the team concept of physician, prosthetist and physical therapist. “It is rare today but it provides amputees with the best option for achieving successful outcomes,” expresses Dr. Uustal.

The P & O team at JFK treats both in and outpatients and the JFK/JRI Prosthetic and Orthotic Lab assists individuals requiring both prosthetic & orthotic devices.

To make an appointment at the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute, call 732.321.7000 ext. 62134 or e-mail Collen Elerker at celerker@jfkhealth.org.

and shoulders, with improved movement and posture during daily tasks that resulted in freer use of her voice.

After eight weeks of therapy, Barbara entered the Speech Therapy office, her face glowing and radiant. “It’s moving!” she exclaimed. “I went back to the doctor and he says the vocal cord is moving again. We did it – I’m going to beat this and I will sing again!” Six weeks later, she sang her first solo in more than a year at her church’s anniversary service. Six months after that, she was once again singing on a weekly basis at church, in the choir, and with her band. She mentioned that other singers would approach her for advice on how to use their voices in a safe and healthy way.

For speech pathologists at JFK, celebrating victories with people like Barbara is one of their greatest motivations. The holistic approach to voice therapy as practiced at JFK means the therapists assess all physical and emotional elements that may be impacting voice use, resulting in improved outlook and insight regarding their difficulties. In a recent e-mail to the speech pathologist, Barbara wrote, “with my strong belief in God and never doubting your work abilities, you pulled me through a traumatic time in my life. I did a song on Saturday ‘Motherless Child’ and you would not believe the range I was able to reach.”

If you or someone you know has difficulties with their communication or specifically with their voice, call the experts at the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at 732-321-7063.

JRI is Proud to Offer Certified Hand Therapy

JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is pleased to announce that Kim Conti, OTR, CHT, has been credentialed as a Certified Hand Therapist (CHT) by the Hand Therapy Certification Commission (HTCC). Kim, a graduate of New York University's Occupational Therapy Program, has 19 years of practical experience in the field. She demonstrates advanced knowledge and dedication to the latest research and evidence based practices in the treatment of upper extremity conditions.

Overseeing the Hand Therapy Program at JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute, Kim shares her passion and skill through mentorship to ensure her staff's ability to provide the highest standard of care. As Joyce Talarico, a retired registered nurse from Metuchen states, "I have had several surgeries over the past several years, and I would not even think of going anywhere else for rehabilitation."

Common upper extremity conditions that the Hand Therapy Program treats but is not limited to:

- *Carpal tunnel syndrome*
- *Tennis elbow*
- *Rotator cuff tear*
- *Trigger finger*
- *De Quervain's tenosynovitis*
- *Nerve palsy*
- *Tendon/nerve lacerations*
- *Fractures*



Treatments may include but are not limited to:

- *Soft tissue mobilizations*
- *Range of motion*
- *Therapeutic heat*
- *Custom or prefabricated splinting*
- *Strengthening*
- *Dexterity training*

The goal is for the individual to increase his/her ability to participate in their daily activities and improve their quality of life. Functional use of the hands is often something that is taken for granted in everyday life. Having early and aggressive rehabilitation by a skilled therapist can make all the difference for a concert pianist, a surgeon or a mechanic, but may be just as important to a mother caring for her infant. Therapists work one-on-one with their client to customize sessions and evaluate individual needs. A physician prescription is required prior to scheduling an appointment for evaluation.

For more information regarding the Outpatient Hand Therapy Program at JFK, please contact Kim Conti, OTR, CHT, at 732-321-7000 x61946.

A Tribute TO A DEDICATED DOCTOR

I remember vividly 25 years ago being wheeled down the hallway of JFK Medical Center on a stretcher. "Which room was mine," I questioned to myself. I was transferred from University Hospital diagnosed with Guillain-Barre Syndrome, completely paralyzed and recently taken off a respirator. Shortly after my arrival, a team of doctors came in and my anxiety increased. However, the attending physician Heikki Uustal, M.D., took approximately two minutes to quell my fears. He was friendly, genuine and he explained what my day-to-day life would be like. He was very encouraging and motivating.

Dr. Uustal has been my physiatrist ever since. I have faced many obstacles and he taught me to treat obstacles as challenges. He treats the "whole patient," knowing how a patient's emotions can affect how successful he or she will be in their recovery. He knew my goal was to go back to work as a 7th grade math teacher and encouraged me to keep striving for that goal.

One of my most memorable moments was when I was an inpatient for 10 months at Johnson Rehabilitation Institute and Dr. Uustal was on vacation when I had taken my first step. When he returned, he was paged to the gym and my physical therapist and I surprised him with a few steps.

I soon transitioned to JFK Day Hospital then I graduated to Outpatient Therapy. During that time I went



back to school for my Master's Degree in Counseling. I'm proud to recall that two years after the onset of my disability, I returned to work as a math teacher and graduated in May of 1992 with my Master's Degree in School Counseling. I have been a School Counselor since 1995.

I have had some difficult times but Dr. Uustal was always there for me. I had a car accident in 2007 on the Garden State Parkway and the ambulance took me to another hospital. My family was able to get in touch with Dr. Uustal early that morning. He spoke to the emergency room doctor and had me transferred to JFK the following day.

It is difficult for me to elaborate on all of the ways Dr. Uustal has contributed to my success. Yes, I now wear braces for my legs and hands and he treats me for them but he is much, much more than a Prosthetic and Orthotics specialist.

~Written by Roberta (Bert) Leveson of Marlboro

2013 MILES FOR MINDS – A GREAT SUCCESS



The 5th Annual Miles for Minds 5K and Fun Run/Walk, sponsored by the JFK Foundation, raised more than \$24,600 to benefit the Center for Head Injuries' continuum of care. The Center's goal is to restore real-life skills to those with head injuries so that they may return to their families and communities at the maximum level possible. Special thanks to the corporations and businesses that provided sponsorships and in-kind donations. The JFK Foundation accomplished a twofold goal of raising funds for treatment and rehabilitation as well as awareness of the serious nature of head injury.



JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute The Leader in Providing Quality Rehabilitation Care

Since 1974, JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute has been helping people rebuild their lives after a serious illness or injury. We do this by delivering comprehensive rehabilitation services based on cutting-edge treatment techniques, innovative research and excellent, personalized medical care.

Headquartered at the JFK Medical Center in Edison, JRI is a comprehensive rehabilitative service provider focused on educating the community on rehabilitative health and helping adults and children with disabilities reach optimal function and independence. The Institute offers a complete array of inpatient and outpatient programs and services in rehabilitative health, including stroke, orthopedics, prosthetic and orthotics, electrodiagnosis, fitness, cardiac, women's health, pain management, pediatrics, speech pathology and audiology, industrial and vocational rehab, and brain injury rehabilitation programs and services. JRI includes a 94-bed inpatient center in Edison. Outpatient centers are located in Edison, Metuchen and Monroe. The JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is accredited by both the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation and Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation. Affiliated with the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is the Shore Rehabilitation Institute, a 40-bed inpatient and outpatient comprehensive rehabilitation hospital located in Brick, NJ. For more information about the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute, visit us at www.jfkmc.org.

www.jfkmc.org

JFK HEALTH SYSTEM



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