How Rehabilitation Differs from Acute Care

Care in a regular hospital is called “acute care”. Acute care focuses on treating critical medical illnesses, stabilizing the patient’s condition, and preventing patients from developing more complications. The patient often receives a great deal of attention and care. Staff members may bathe, feed, and dress the patient. There may also be various medical treatments.

In rehabilitation, physicians, therapists, and nurses help the patient recover as much function and independence as possible by learning new ways to do things. Rehabilitation requires the patient to practice performing challenging tasks repeatedly. This is noticeably different from acute care, and sometimes family members have a hard time with this.

A good rehabilitation program is an active one. It is hard work. Most patients will undergo three to six hours of therapies each day. We expect the patient to practice and use the skills learned in therapy. For example, after a patient learns to put on his new leg, he will be expected to do this each day. The patient may struggle and complain. It may seem easier and faster for someone else to do it for him. But only through practice can the patient make progress and regain independence. Family members can help by offering praise and encouragement.

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