ENHANCING MOBILITY AND FUNCTION THROUGH GROUP ACTIVITY
IN AN INPATIENT GERIATRIC REHAB SETTING

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Physiotherapy and occupational therapy groups provide an opportunity for clients in a geriatric inpatient rehab setting to enrich their therapy experience. A review of the literature supports the benefits of group activity and based on the evidence available from this research, we strive to implement these findings into clinical practice by engaging patients in focused groups. With this philosophy, three groups were initiated three years ago at Toronto Rehabilitation Institute Inpatient Geriatric Rehab Program by physiotherapy (PT) and occupational therapy (OT) teams to meet the need for increased therapy time and to supplement and expand upon individual therapy sessions. These groups have been named “Stretch and Strengthening” which involves seated exercise, “Balance and Coordination” which challenges patients balance during standing exercises and “Cardio” which provides an opportunity for patients to use one of our cardio machines. We select patients based on PT/OT assessments related to mobility and cognition. In addition to OT and PT therapy goals, they integrate socialization into therapy while motivating clients to work towards their individualized rehab goals. Outcomes are measured in three primary ways; a) through client participation numbers, b) client satisfaction reports, and c) changes demonstrated upon OT and PT re-assessments. The patients have shown to be motivated to participate in group therapy classes based on an understanding that regular activity increases their functional ability and will help increase their independence. They follow the instructor’s demonstrations, taking rest breaks as needed, and some have reported to enjoy the groups because they benefit from working together and seeing the performance abilities of other participants. By participating in these groups, our patients have the opportunity to become educated about reducing joint pain and enhancing muscle performance, reduce the risk of falls, improve their ability to perform activities of daily living, as well as to become more physically and socially active.