

reConnections

JOURNAL FOR WAKEMED REHAB



The
Heart of
Rehab

THE TIES THAT BIND
THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY
GYAN MEHTA'S STROKE
REHAB STORY



“It is the personal touch that sets us apart.”

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

In our last edition of *reConnections*, we highlighted the diverse ways that evidence-based technologies are being used to deliver advanced care in all our rehab settings. While state-of-the-art technologies are essential to quality care, the success of WakeMed Rehab and the exceptional outcomes of our patients are even more closely linked to how care is delivered.

When patients are asked about their experience at WakeMed Rehab, it is rare that they first report an innovative treatment technique or an advanced technology as most memorable. Instead, it is the people. Time and time again, we hear patients say things like, “The therapists were very thorough, detail-oriented, encouraging and educational”... “Their plan for me respected where I was in the process”... “They took the time to speak with me on a personal level”... “The rehab nurses maintain one-on-one relationships with all of their patients,” and “They never gave up on me and encouraged me to not give up on myself.”

At WakeMed Rehab, we seek to find the right combination of offering the latest and greatest in technological advances while never swaying from our mission to provide outstanding and compassionate care to all. It is the personal touch that sets us apart.



From support groups designed to build community to one-on-one peer support sessions where patients discover there is life after injury or illness and individualized care planning designed to incorporate the unique goals of patients, personal connections shape the experience for our patients.

Whether in rehab recovering from traumatic brain injury, stroke, spinal cord injury, amputation, orthopaedic issue or something else, the patient’s recovery journey at WakeMed is marked by genuine connections that inspire hope and help move them forward on the path to recovery.

Please enjoy this edition of *reConnections* highlighting the more personal side of rehabilitation care.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Villena".

Beth Villena, MHA, LCSW, CCM
Director, Rehab Hospital

reConnections

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Supporting WakeMed Rehab

The WakeMed Foundation welcomes contributions to benefit the programs and services of WakeMed Rehab. To learn how you can support WakeMed Rehab, please visit the WakeMed Foundation at www.wakemedfoundation.org or call 919-350-7656.

WAKEMED REHABILITATION LOCATIONS

We offer a variety of rehab services and programs with convenient locations throughout Wake County and in Clayton.

INPATIENT

WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital – Raleigh Campus
3000 New Bern Avenue
Raleigh, NC 27610
919-350-7876

OUTPATIENT

Please call 919-350-7422 for WakeMed Outpatient Rehab scheduling

WakeMed Outpatient Rehab – Raleigh Campus
3000 New Bern Avenue
Raleigh, NC 27610

WakeMed Outpatient Rehab – Raleigh Medical Park
23 Sunnybrook Road, Ste. 300
Raleigh, NC 27610

WakeMed Physical Therapy – Oberlin
505 Oberlin Road, Ste. 140
Raleigh, NC 27605

WakeMed Physical Therapy – Brier Creek
7901 TW Alexander Drive, Ste. 500
Raleigh, NC 27617

WakeMed Outpatient Rehab – Durant Road
10880 Durant Road, Ste. 302
Raleigh, NC 27614

WakeMed Outpatient Rehab – Cary
110 Kildaire Park Drive, Ste. 201
Cary, NC 27518

WakeMed Physical Therapy – Cary
110 Kildaire Park Drive, Ste. 208
Cary, NC 27518

WakeMed Outpatient Neuro Rehab – Cary
110 Kildaire Park Drive, Ste. 401
Cary, NC 27518

WakeMed Outpatient Specialty Rehab – Cary
200 Ashville Avenue, Ste. 10
Cary, NC 27518

WakeMed Physical Therapy – Pelvic Health – Cary
210 Ashville Avenue, 3rd Floor
Cary, NC 27518

WakeMed Physical Therapy – Cambridge Village – Apex
10000 Cambridge Village Loop
Apex, NC 27502

WakeMed Outpatient Rehab – Clayton
104 Medspring Drive, Ste. 210
Clayton, NC 27520

CARDIAC REHAB

WakeMed Raleigh Campus and Cary (Kildaire Park Drive) outpatient rehab locations

PULMONARY REHAB & COVID-19 RECOVERY

WakeMed Raleigh Campus and Cary (Kildaire Park Drive) outpatient rehab locations

HEALTHWORKS FITNESS & WELLNESS

WakeMed Raleigh Campus and Cary (Kildaire Park Drive) outpatient rehab locations

OUTPATIENT WOUND CARE

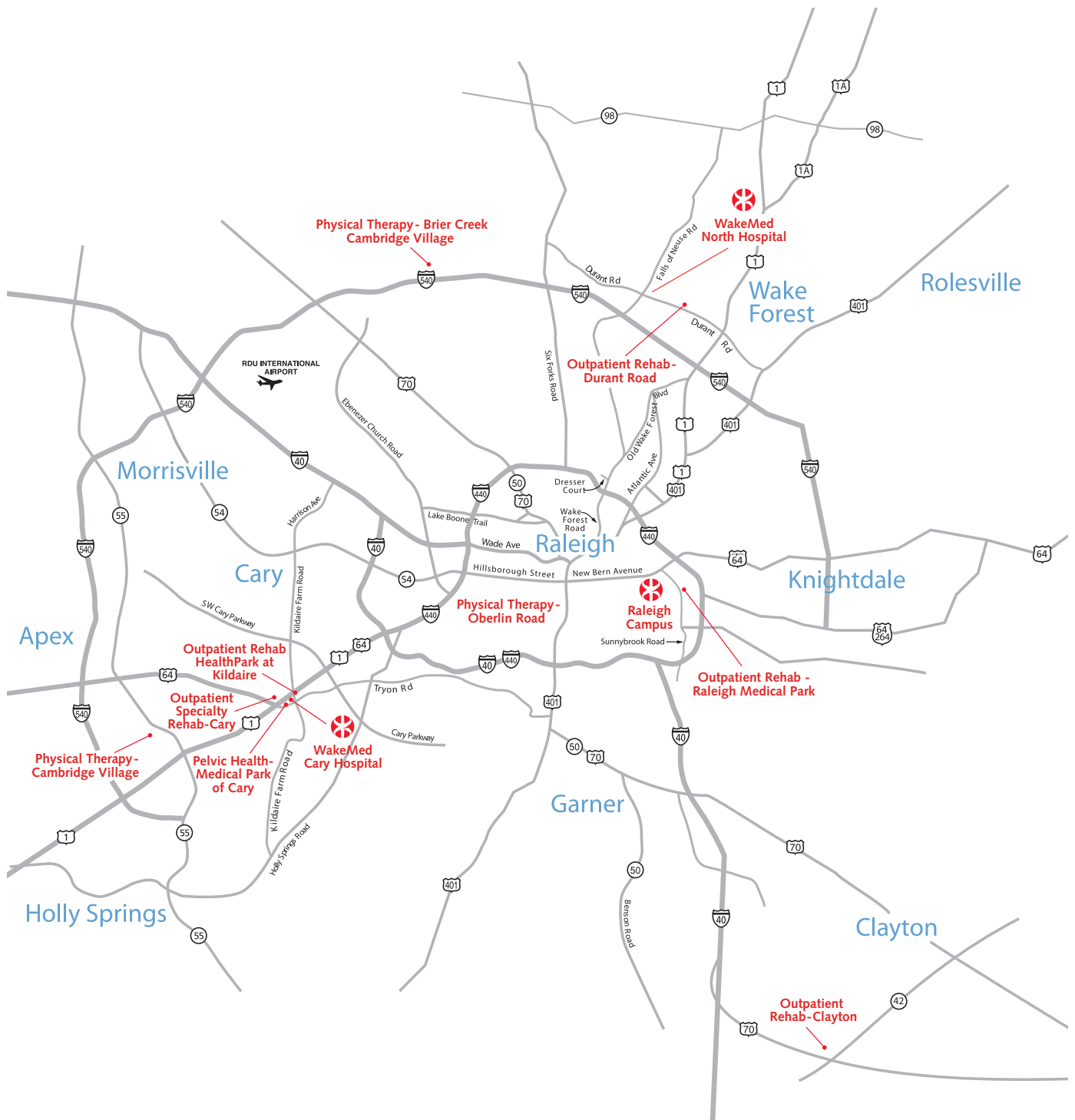
Please call 919-350-4515 for WakeMed Wound Care scheduling

WakeMed Wound Care – Raleigh Campus
3000 New Bern Avenue
Raleigh, NC 27610

WakeMed Wound Care – Cary
210 Ashville Avenue, Ste. 420
Cary, NC 27518

HOME HEALTH

WakeMed Home Health
2920 Highwoods Boulevard
Raleigh, NC 27604
919-350-7990



Clayton, Durant Road, Raleigh Campus and Raleigh Medical Park locations operate as a hospital-based service under the license of WakeMed Raleigh Campus. WakeMed Outpatient Specialty Rehab, WakeMed Outpatient Rehab – Cary and WakeMed Outpatient Neuro Rehab – Cary operate as a hospital-based service under the license of WakeMed Cary Hospital. The WakeMed Physical Therapy practices operate as private practices.

The TIES *That* BIND

Retired Rehab Manager Skip Roy Revitalizes Peer Support Volunteer Program

With more than 50 years of dedicated service to WakeMed, Skip Roy is a treasured member of the local health care community. He began his employment with WakeMed in 1969, as a physical therapist, and was soon promoted to manager of Acute Rehabilitation Services. During his career, Skip played an invaluable role in growing the health system's rehab continuum. In October 2012, he retired from management but soon became a supplemental physical therapist, and today he serves as a dedicated hospital volunteer.

Answering the Call

A volunteer at heart, Skip offers his time to numerous local and international non-profit health care organizations. He is passionate about using his rehab expertise to help people reclaim their quality of life.

Therefore, it was no surprise that Skip was tapped to reenergize the Rehab Hospital's Peer Support Volunteer Program in 2022. "The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on many of the hospital's volunteer programs, and this was no exception," Skip explained. "While the Peer

Support Volunteer Program began in 2018, it needed a dedicated program coordinator to give it the attention it deserved. When they asked me to help, I was up for the challenge.”

What is the Peer Support Volunteer Program?

The Peer Support Volunteer Program facilitates visits between current rehab patients and former patients who have re-established themselves in the community after experiencing a stroke, life-changing injury or amputation. The program is divided into four areas of care: stroke, spinal cord injury, brain injury and limb loss/amputee; and the goal is to create supportive relationships and inspiration for patients who are in the hospital facing a long road to recovery.

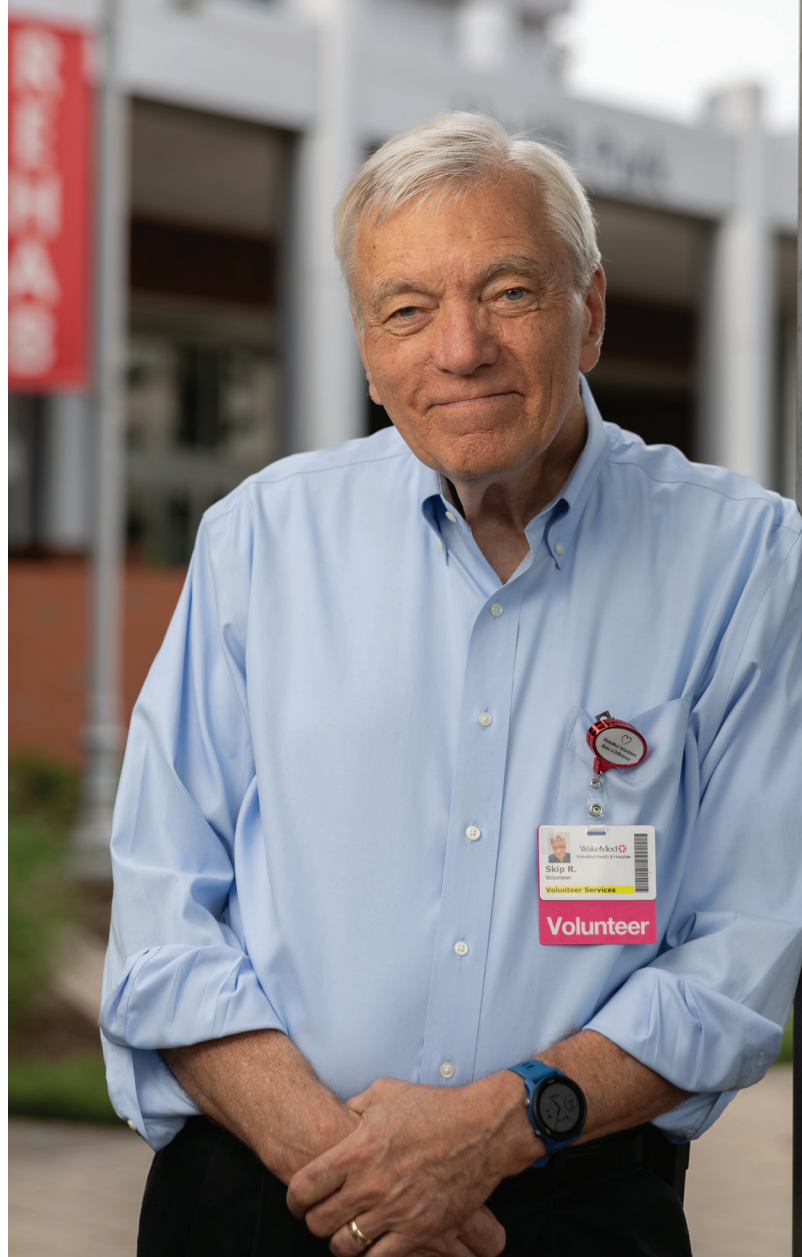
“This program is about hope,” says Skip. “Trauma professionals are amazing because they can give patients their bodies back after a life-altering event. But in the rehab world, we work to give people their lives back. Peer supporters initiate that process by giving hope.”

To begin, rehab caregivers identify former patients who may be interested in serving as peer support volunteers. They contact the patients nine to twelve months after their hospital stay to see if there is interest in volunteering. If they decide to participate, Skip helps them navigate the WakeMed Volunteer Services application and orientation process. He then provides a program-specific orientation to get them started – and helps get them connected with current hospital patients who would like a visit from a peer support volunteer. While the WakeMed team helps coordinate the first meeting, subsequent meetings can be arranged between the patient and volunteer if desired.

“Following a major, life-changing health event, many rehab patients think that life has ended,” says Skip. “But our peer supporters show them that they can get their lives back, have families and careers, re-engage in hobbies, and much more. Life will be different, but it is not over. This realization is important to recovery.”

Skip also supports the Rehab Hospital leadership team in coordinating an annual recognition event for the peer support volunteers and writes a column for their quarterly newsletter known as ‘Skip’s Corner.’

“I am committed to this special program because I want all patients to recover and enjoy a wonderful life,” concludes Skip. “As a physical therapist, I can do a lot for my patients, but I can’t give them the same degree of understanding and hope that a former patient can. Because I haven’t lived through the same challenges, there’s only so much I can say or do to reassure them. That’s where our volunteers come in – and they are a truly remarkable asset.”



Through Skip’s leadership and the unwavering support of our peer support volunteers, patients who are facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles are offered a sense of community and hope that can be truly life-changing.

“But in the rehab world, we work to give people their lives back. Peer supporters initiate that process by giving hope.”

— Skip Roy, PT

WakeMed Rehab Hospital Volunteer

(from left) Tim Gunning, Chris Clarke
and Byron Stallings



MEET OUR

Dedicated Volunteers

Tim Gunning

Amputee/Limb Loss
Peer Support Volunteer

Eleven years ago, Tim's left leg was amputated above the knee after several unsuccessful surgeries led to infection. He spent two weeks at WakeMed Rehab and later received a prosthetic leg. After just five outpatient appointments with his prosthetic, Tim's treatment ended.

"It was all insurance would cover, but it wasn't enough," reflects Tim. "But there were no special support programs back then, so I learned how to be an amputee on my own."

Fortunately, Tim went back to work in commercial architecture/construction and lived a productive life after his amputation. But upon retirement, he felt called to give back.

"I wanted to offer other amputees the support and first-hand insights I never had," says Tim. "Amputation is life-changing – only other amputees can truly understand."

In 2021, Tim became a peer support volunteer. He visits patients regularly and has supported more than 30 amputees thus far. The work brings him great joy, especially when patients smile and say thank you, and he senses that they will be okay.

"Helping people understand what to expect is a big responsibility," says Tim. "We discuss many topics, but I focus on healing, health and setting goals, especially the big goal of walking again. It's that positive mindset I want to leave behind."

Chris Clarke

Stroke Peer Support
Volunteer

After Chris Clarke suffered a stroke in 2016, he embarked on a difficult, 18-month recovery. He never returned to work, and he lost the use of his right arm and foot.

During Chris' hospitalization, the Peer Support Volunteer Program did not exist. However, he was visited by a friend who had also suffered a stroke, and it helped a lot. Once well enough, Chris worked with Rehab leaders to become a peer supporter. It's been six years, and Chris continues to visit up to four patients every week. They discuss their experiences, and Chris recommends community resources for support.

"Stroke is devastating and lonely, but patients must know that they're not alone," says Chris. "It helps a great deal to speak with someone who has been down the same road. I emphasize that patients can recover missing parts of themselves if they keep working."

Chris aims to create hope, inspire positivity, and help bridge patients back to the world. His visits have included patients with language loss and a young mother who couldn't envision her future.

"This role is incredibly rewarding," concludes Chris. "I find joy in helping patients see where they can go. While stroke will change your life, life can still be good."

Byron Stallings

Stroke Peer Support
Volunteer

As a peer supporter and ordained pastor, Byron Stallings is passionate about hope. The word 'hope' is even inscribed on the wooden cross he gifts patients upon each visit.

"After my stroke, I felt alone, despite a lot of support," explains Byron, who became a peer supporter last year. "It was a dark path to travel. But God brought me back from the darkness to help other stroke patients realize that things will be okay."

Byron experienced three strokes between 2019 and 2020, the last two being so severe that doctors didn't think he would survive. He continues to manage post-stroke aphasia (language loss), although he has worked tirelessly to speak again. To inspire others with his progress, Byron visits patients who also have aphasia. He sees up to four patients every other week, and because he no longer drives, his wife provides transportation. She knows the visits are beneficial to Byron and his own recovery, as his visits also remind him of how far he's come in a short time.

"It makes me happy to offer patients hope," says Byron. "Some ask for my phone number so we can stay in touch. Nothing compares to talking with someone who's been there. I show patients that if I can do it, they can too."

WakeMed

StepForward

PROSTHESIS TRAINING PROGRAM



Once you've recovered from your surgery and have your prosthetic device, it's time to start thinking about relearning how to do the things you enjoy with your new prosthetic limb.

WakeMed StepForward is a comprehensive, structured program that helps people:

- Safely, confidently and consistently use their new limb
- Use their prosthesis to their fullest potential
- Care for themselves and their prosthesis
- Troubleshoot issues and identify who to call for assistance

There are three ways to participate in WakeMed StepForward:

Inpatient – as an admitted patient at WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital

Outpatient – at one of WakeMed Rehabilitation's participating outpatient practices in Wake County and Clayton

WakeMed Home Health – in your home

Please note not all patients qualify for inpatient StepForward. An evaluation with a WakeMed physical therapist and occupational therapist as well as an insurance plan review will help WakeMed Rehab determine which setting is most appropriate.

Ready to Take A Step Forward? Call WakeMed Rehabilitation at 919-350-7876.

A physician referral is needed for your evaluation. Referrals can be entered in Epic, called in or faxed to 919-350-8791.



The Value of Community

WAKEMED AMPUTEE GROUP ENCOURAGES MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS BOTH IN THE HOSPITAL & BEYOND

On the third Wednesday of every month, a special group gathers at WakeMed's Raleigh Campus to talk, laugh and learn from each other. All group members have experienced amputation and are searching for connections with others who have been through the same type of life-altering event. The Amputee Group, as it is now called, has become one of the Rehab Hospital's most successful programs, creating its own small community based upon sharing fellowship, questions and advice.

"Through this group, we show patients who have experienced amputation that we are part of their lives, even after they leave the hospital," says Beth Soto, LCSW, a WakeMed Rehab case manager who was tapped to lead and grow the group 13 years ago. "As rehab professionals, we have seen firsthand how important it is for patients who've experienced a life-changing event to connect with others who have gone through the same thing, and we want to create a safe place and positive environment for them to do so. Many times we have helped amputees who are feeling hopeless

develop a positive attitude by giving them a look at what life can look like well beyond amputation."

Beth says it's an intimate group, with attendance ranging from six to 16 participants each month. "We consistently have a good group of people who offer each other genuine camaraderie. The message we all try to convey is that life will be different, but they can do this. Modifications can be made so that amputees can reclaim their quality of life. It's really special when existing members can give that advice and show new members that life does get better."

All Are Welcome

The Amputee Group is open to anyone who has experienced amputation, and members participate during many stages of recovery – some are still in the hospital receiving acute care and waiting for a prosthetic, and some are former patients who have been using a prosthetic for several years. However, being a former or current WakeMed patient is not required – members come from word of mouth, too.

Rich Klink is an active member who heard about WakeMed’s Amputee Group from his prosthetist – and was curious enough to attend a meeting before undergoing his below the knee amputation surgery back in 2022.

“I didn’t know what to expect, but I was absolutely amazed at how open and supportive everyone was from the moment I arrived,” Rich explains. “Joining really eased my tension about having the amputation and I can honestly say this group

has changed my life. I learned so much, found answers to all my questions, and found a mentor and a real friend who took me under his wing and has supported me through my entire journey. I don’t even feel like I have a disability. We play golf together, go to the gym and I even participated in a 5K run – Beth and the group even showed up to support me. I feel so fortunate to have found such a strong community.”

Gaining More Knowledge

In addition to open discussion and fellowship, members are enlightened by guest speakers who share information about life after amputation and using a prosthetic. Speakers have included prosthetists, sports figures, experts in neuromuscular rehabilitation, nutritionists, nurses who specialize in skin care and pain control specialists. Beth coordinates these speakers, and she is also supported at each meeting by April Gallons, a WakeMed inpatient rehab physical therapist who offers

a therapy perspective. April answers questions and gives advice on topics such as balance, flexibility and strengthening, especially for patients who are awaiting a prosthetic.

“Beth has done an amazing job of growing this program into something spectacular,” adds April. “Together, our goal is to continue to spread the word throughout the community.”

In her years as group coordinator, Beth has taken many steps to enhance participation and appeal to more members, such as incorporating a Q&A session for experienced members to share with those who are newer to the group. She also sends out weekly reminder emails and helps organize additional socials and celebrations.

“April and I attend each meeting to help guide discussions in the right direction, but the members do most of the talking and engaging,” says Beth. “It’s wonderful to see them laughing, enjoying themselves and getting the chance to step out of their reality for a while. Some even feel comfortable enough to remove their prosthetic legs, and many get together outside of the group.”

Inspiration & Hope for the Future

In addition to encouraging long-lasting bonds, Beth and April remind members that they can always count on WakeMed for continued guidance, connections – or even physical or occupational therapy when needed.

“This group really isn’t about WakeMed – it’s about the people who show up,” Beth says. “We provide the meeting space and the programming – and we’re here to help attendees navigate whatever challenges they may have. But, most importantly, it’s about community, relationship-building and inspiring hope. It’s a real privilege to be a part of it, and it’s so fulfilling to witness how they lift each other up.”

“Through this group, we show patients who have experienced amputation that we are part of their lives, even after they leave the hospital.”

— Beth Soto,
LCSW





“Joining really eased my tension about having the amputation and I can honestly say this group has changed my life.”

— Rich Klink, WakeMed Amputee Support Group member





SERVICE DOGS IN LIFE AND CARE

Gyan Mehta's Stroke Rehab Story

75-year-old Gyan Mehta resides in Cincinnati, Ohio, with his wife, Laurie, who is blind and is supported by her guide dog, Nisbit. Over many years, their lives have been enhanced by the devoted care of six service dogs.

Confident Laurie was in good hands with Nisbit, in mid-November, Gyan flew to Durham, North Carolina, for a week-long trip to see his elder brother, sister-in-law, niece and her husband.

“I wanted to see my brother since he is not in good health, having suffered a stroke several months ago.”

A Wake-Up Call Like No Other

On November 13, 2023, just before 5 am, Gyan woke up suddenly, feeling disoriented. He discovered he could barely speak, and his right-side arm and leg were numb and unresponsive. He fell upon attempting to walk. Despite falling, he managed to drag himself to a desk near his bed, where his laptop and smartphone were located. However, he found it extremely difficult to type with his fingers and use the phone.

“I was unable to alert my brother and sister-in-law as they were in another part of the house.”

After struggling, Gyan managed to call his wife in Ohio. Although his speech was garbled and unintelligible, she recognized it was Gyan. She soon understood the severity of the situation, identified it as a stroke and promptly informed him that she would seek help.



Signs of a Stroke

Following this call to his wife, Gyan managed to dial 911 on his phone — though by this point, he was unable to speak at all.

“I was unaware of my brother’s address, as it was a new location for me. I kept the 911 operator on the line, hoping they would be able to locate me by my phone signal, which I later learned did happen,” said Gyan.

Meanwhile, Gyan’s wife attempted to reach family in the area.

“She contacted my niece and brother, among others. Fortunately, my niece and her husband — who are both doctors — were awake at 5 am, so while no one in the home was awake, local family had been alerted.”

Emergency medical services (EMS) soon arrived and quickly sprang into action.

“The EMS team was great,” shares Gyan. “I was able to take my wallet and phone with me in the ambulance. They took me straight to nearby Duke Hospital where I was received a CT scan and MRI, which showed I was suffering from an ischemic stroke and was a candidate for tissue plasminogen activator (tPA). Though conscious, I could not speak, so the quick-thinking young doctor asked to use my phone, pointed it at my face to unlock it and called my wife, who was able to speak with him and give permission for the use of tPA. Meanwhile,

I also received a text message from my daughter-in-law (who is a neurologist) and from my son in California who told the medical team that if I was a candidate for tPA, they should give it to me.”

After tPA treatment, Gyan fell asleep and woke up to find his niece, who lived in the area, had arrived. His eldest son also flew to Durham to be with Gyan, and his younger son flew to Ohio to help his wife. A few days before Thanksgiving, Gyan’s wife and younger son arrived, so they could be together for the holiday.

He remained as an inpatient at Duke Hospital for nine days. Over that time, Gyan’s ability to move his right side and speak gradually returned.

A Transfer to WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital for Continued Recovery

On November 21, Gyan was transferred to the WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital where he received exceptional care to continue restoration of his mobility and speech.

“I received intense physical, occupational and speech therapy. The therapists were extremely good, and the therapy helped me to progressively improve.”

Physical therapist Sara Lingle, DPT, is grateful to have met the family and provided Gyan’s care.

“He was motivated and knew he needed to get well quickly to support his wife. We did a lot of dynamic

balance activities. He had some foot drop, so we worked on interventions to improve his gait and prevent him from falling. We incorporated strength training to improve his functional mobility. We decided to include Pistachio, our therapy dog, and his handler, Elizabeth Penny, in his care since he walks his wife's dog at home. Our goal was to make his therapy as functional as possible."

Occupational therapist Alison Mattox, OTR/L, also had important goals for his recovery.

"When he came in, he had some good return in his right arm, but he had some coordination deficits, so that was our main goal for his recovery. We worked on medication management and the coordination required to manage his pill schedule and place them in a med box. Since we knew he had a dog to care for, we needed to ensure he'd be able to feed the dog, get his water bowl, place it down without spillage and walk the dog. As part of his therapy, we incorporated Elizabeth and Pistachio into his care. It worked out great. He has come a long way, and he is doing wonderfully."

Elizabeth also recalls great memories of working with Gyan.

"I showed up with Pistachio on a Friday morning, and we walked downstairs to the WakeMed Rehabilitation Healthpark. Laurie, his wife, said this was important for him because caring for her dogs over the years always helped to lower his blood pressure. We ended up doing 10 laps with Pistachio around the Healthpark with no device, and Gyan did amazing."

The Healing Journey Continues

On December 5, Gyan prepared to fly out to California to continue his recovery.

"California made the most sense as our next step because both of my sons, daughters-in-law and six grandchildren live there. I am determined to continue in my recovery."

Gyan looks forward to enjoying and appreciating the blessings of being with family — thanks to the swift and intensive work of his medical teams.

"I am grateful for the wonderful and professional care I've received in North Carolina."

"We decided to include Pistachio, our therapy dog, and his handler, Elizabeth Penny, in his care since he walks his wife's dog at home. Our goal was to make his therapy as functional as possible."

— Sara Lingle, DPT

A Poem for WakeMed's Sara Lingle from Gyan Mehta

Gyan is incredibly grateful to his entire WakeMed care team, but it was Sara Lingle, DPT, his physical therapist, who made a lasting impression on him. He wrote a poem in her honor to express his heartfelt gratitude.

*In the realm of healing, where strength meets care,
There stands a guide, a beacon rare.
Sara, the therapist, with a heart so kind,
In the tapestry of recovery, she's intricately twined.*

*Post-stroke, I stumbled, lost in the maze,
Yet, Sara appeared, a sunbeam's gaze.
Her hands, a compass, guiding my way,
Through valleys of challenges, towards a brighter day.*

*With expertise refined and a spirit so warm,
Sara, the healer, in the eye of the storm.
She asked of my toes, a challenge, so sweet,
To lift small bean bags, a feat to repeat.*

*My right leg, a warrior weakened in strife,
Found strength anew, in the dance of life.
Bean bags, once toys, now tools of grace,
In Sara's hands, a journey to embrace.*

*Toes that once danced on Rubik's cubes with flair,
Now picked up bean bags, suspended in air.
A testament to progress, a symbol so clear,
Of resilience and hope, banishing every fear.*

*My wife of 41 years, witnessed with delight,
The Rubik's cube solved, a fascinating sight.
Amused and amazed, as the tale unfolds,
Now enchanted anew, as recovery molds.*

*Sara, the architect of my healing art,
Rebuilding foundations, mending the heart.
In her presence, a symphony, a harmonious song,
Of restoration and courage, where I belong.*

*Through each session, a puzzle untangled,
A Rubik's cube of life, by my toes, handled.
In Sara's care, a partnership formed,
A narrative rewritten, a spirit transformed.*

*So here I stand on the brink of the unknown,
With Sara by my side, seeds of strength sown.
In recovery's embrace, hand in hand,
I navigate the healing, a journey unplanned.*

*To the one named Sara, a guide so true,
Whose touch rekindles the strength I once knew.
In the dance of recovery, we gracefully sway,
For a brighter tomorrow, together we pray.*

GETTING TO THE *Heart* of REHAB AT WAKEMED

What exactly does it take to recover and thrive after a life-changing injury or illness? The answer is far from simple, but one thing shines through – the people involved are at the heart of each successful patient story.

A True Team Effort

Patients are at the center of everything at WakeMed Rehab, and the path ahead for each patient can be full of unknowns, so it's important for them to know they will not be alone on their journey to regaining abilities and achieving their goals.

“A patient’s mindset has a lot to do with their progress, and it really matters when they feel supported by the people all around them,” said Beth Villena, MHA, LCSW, CCM, director of WakeMed Rehab Hospital. “From a patient’s care team to family members and volunteers, the powerful impact that each person has the potential to make cannot be overstated.”

While WakeMed Rehab team members each have their own specific professional focus, they wear many hats and frequently step in as coaches, educators and confidants.



They go above and beyond their role to collaborate, jump into action and extend themselves to bridge any gap they see.

“I regularly hear from patients and their families how much they appreciate the extra efforts and acts of kindness from our staff and volunteers – they can tell it really comes from the heart,” said Beth.

Helping Patients Heal & Thrive

No matter who you are, when tragedy happens, the WakeMed team wants to do everything in their power to meet patients where they are and do what is needed to encourage healing and progress.

“Most of the time it goes unsaid or unseen because they are not looking for recognition, but the WakeMed Rehab team is doing all sorts of things behind the scenes – from

helping patients connect with far-away loved ones to making sure they feel celebrated at special moments,” said Beth. “Those thoughtful actions have a positive snowball effect that builds happiness, hope and healing.”

Innovative Changes Come from Within

As WakeMed continues to innovate with new programs and services to meet the needs of our patients, our programs are always evolving to help those with very specific rehab requirements.

“The majority of new ideas and equipment are generated from our frontline nurses, therapists, case managers and volunteers – they see the needs of our patients firsthand,” said Beth. “They take the time to seek out solutions, explore new treatment paths, investigate new equipment and most of all to advocate for each patient’s needs.”

WakeMed’s leadership embraces new ideas and suggestions from the entire team to provide the best, most comprehensive care. The exoskeleton, BITS (Bioness Integrated Therapy System), Blaze Pods and virtual reality are all the result of staff identified needs, team driven efforts and WakeMed Foundation funding to continually pursue and provide the best possible care for patients.

“It’s called the Wake Way, and it is a vital part of what makes the WakeMed team so amazing.”

— Beth Villena, MHA, LCSW, CCM

Putting Others First

“You can have all the training and equipment in the world, but the level of care will fall short if your heart isn’t in it,” said Beth. “The type of person who will choose to join the WakeMed Rehab team is one who has an innate ability to empathize and a strong desire to truly do whatever it takes to help others – it’s what makes them tick.”

There is a culture of care and caring at WakeMed that leads to healing. It’s called the Wake Way, and it is a vital part of what makes the WakeMed team so amazing.

Putting others first and setting a standard of excellence at WakeMed is what creates exceptional experiences for patients and families. The WakeMed Rehab team’s depth and breadth of experience, techniques and technology enables them to meet the unique and challenging needs of each patient, but most remarkable of all is how they put their whole heart into going above and beyond for a truly unique experience.



WakeMed Rehab Support Groups

WakeMed Amputee Support Group

Third Wednesday of each month

4 to 5:30 pm

WakeMed Conference Dining – Raleigh Campus
For information or to join the meeting virtually or in-person, call **919-350-8903** or email Beth Soto at bsoto@wakemed.org.

WakeMed Spinal Cord Injury Support Group

First Wednesday of each month

Noon to 1 pm

WakeMed Conference Dining – Raleigh Campus
For information or to join the meeting virtually or in-person, call **919-350-8789** or email Maria Rivera at marivera@wakemed.org.

WakeMed Stroke Support Group

Second Tuesday of each month

Noon to 1 pm

WakeMed Health Park Classroom – Raleigh Campus
For information or to join the meeting virtually or in-person, call **919-350-8113** or email Jaycie Frye at jayfrye@wakemed.org.

Traumatic Brain Injury Friends Support Group

Second Thursday of each month

7 to 8 pm

Conference Center - WakeMed Cary Hospital
For more information, call **919-350-8848** or email Dorothy Shannon at dshannon@wakemed.org.

Dysautonomia Support Group

Second & Fourth Monday of each month

3 to 4 pm

WakeMed Healthpark Classroom – Raleigh Campus
For more information or to join the group virtually, contact Erin Ripley at eripley@wakemed.org.

Cathy Smith Named Executive Director, Rehab Services

We are pleased to share that Cathy Smith, PT, MHA has been promoted to executive director of Rehab Services effective August 2024. Cathy has been a member of the WakeMed family since 1994, when she joined the organization as a physical therapist. She was promoted to manager in 1997 and named to her most recent role of director of Rehab Services, Cardiac Rehab and Healthworks Fitness/Wellness in 2004.

In her new role, she will have responsibility for the administrative management and coordination of WakeMed Rehab Services, which includes Acute Rehab Services at all hospitals, the WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital, the Outpatient Rehab program, Cardiac Rehab and Wound Care. She will work collaboratively with staff, providers, external stakeholders, administration, patients and their families to align available services with our mission and aspirational goals while achieving departmental goals and objectives.

“I am incredibly honored and grateful for the opportunity to take on this new role with our amazing rehab team,” said Cathy. “I feel blessed to have worked for WakeMed for the past 30 years, and this promotion is a testament to the hard work and support of those before me and around me. I am incredibly excited and humbled to facilitate the next chapter of a powerful legacy of excellence in rehabilitation.”

Please join us in congratulating Cathy on her new role.



CONGRATULATIONS

Excellence in Healthcare Award Recipients



Each year, Professional Research Consultants (PRC) identifies health care organizations that have gone above and beyond to achieve excellence with the patient experience.

The PRC Excellence in Healthcare Awards are based on the percentage of patients who rate the Overall Quality of Care/Overall Quality of Doctor Care (for providers) as “excellent.” In 2024, we are proud to recognize numerous Top Performer Awards, which recognizes service lines and physicians scoring at the 100th percentile within the PRC national client database, and 5-Star Awards, which recognize those at or above the 90th percentile. Congratulations to our award winners!

WakeMed Rehab Units/Practices

Top Performers

- Cardiac Rehab – Cary
- Cardiac Rehab – Raleigh Campus
- Physical Therapy – Brier Creek
- Physical Therapy – Cambridge Village
- Pulmonary Rehab – Raleigh Campus

5-Star Awards

- Outpatient Rehab – Clayton
- Outpatient Rehab – Durant Road
- Outpatient Rehab – Raleigh Medical Park
- Outpatient Wound Care – Raleigh Campus
- Physical Therapy – Oberlin
- Pulmonary Rehab – Cary

WakeMed Named Among Best Rehabilitation Hospitals in the U.S

WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital has been named a 2024-2025 Best Hospital for Rehabilitation by *U.S. News & World Report*, coming in at #21 in the nation.

This is the fourth year that WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital has been named among the best hospitals for those recovering from traumatic injury, stroke, heart attack and other conditions. U.S. News & World Report evaluated 1,049 adult rehabilitation hospitals to determine the top 50 hospitals.

The WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital is a leading provider of comprehensive rehabilitation services in the Southeast. The 103-bed inpatient facility is the largest in North Carolina, and our team of care providers specialize in treating adults and children who have experienced a stroke, brain injury, spinal cord injury, orthopaedic issue, traumatic injury or limb loss through rehab programs that are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)—the highest possible level of accreditation.



Strategic Direction for 2024

CANCER REHAB PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

WakeMed Rehabilitation is pleased to introduce one of our 2024 strategic initiatives: creating a comprehensive cancer rehab continuum of care. This initiative perfectly fits our organization's mission and is keenly focused on the aspirational goals - quality, extraordinary team, preferred partner and innovation. This program will positively impact patient care and improve access in our community.

In September 2022, WakeMed Cancer Care – Hematology and Medical Oncology opened its doors, providing new options for patients with cancer in Wake County. Since then, the practice has experienced significant growth and is projecting to see over 30,000 encounters this year. This remarkable progress is a testament to WakeMed's commitment to provide the best care for our patients with cancer.

To meet the needs of WakeMed Cancer Care patients, we developed a cancer rehab committee. Committee members include representatives from our three acute care hospitals, the WakeMed Rehab Hospital, outpatient rehab, cardiopulmonary rehab, home health, nutrition services, medical-based fitness and wellness, and our administrative and physician partners at WakeMed Cancer Care. We began work in the fall of 2023.

The goal of our committee is to provide comprehensive cancer rehab care that supports the organization by utilizing evidence-based practices and systemwide resources to minimize complications, enhance daily functioning and assure the best quality of life outcomes. Once our goal was established, our team quickly transitioned to prioritizing needs. Of top priority was to grow knowledge of current cancer treatment options and their holistic impact on the patient's physical, emotional and psychological well-being. The team decided to collaborate with the Physiological Oncology Rehabilitation Institute (PORi), a renowned institution with a strong focus on patient-centered care and patient functional outcomes. In February 2024, through a generous gift from the WakeMed Foundation, we hosted a two-day, in-person educational course which included validation of participant proficiency. To extend the impact of this training, a team of PORi course attendees created a comprehensive online module with a competency assessment for employees who could not attend the course.

In addition to educational activities, our steering committee launched several subcommittees for clinical disease-specific program development. The goals of these subcommittees include designing population-specific patient and family education, clinician competencies, innovative programming, and developing a marketing and referral development plan. These subcommittees include:

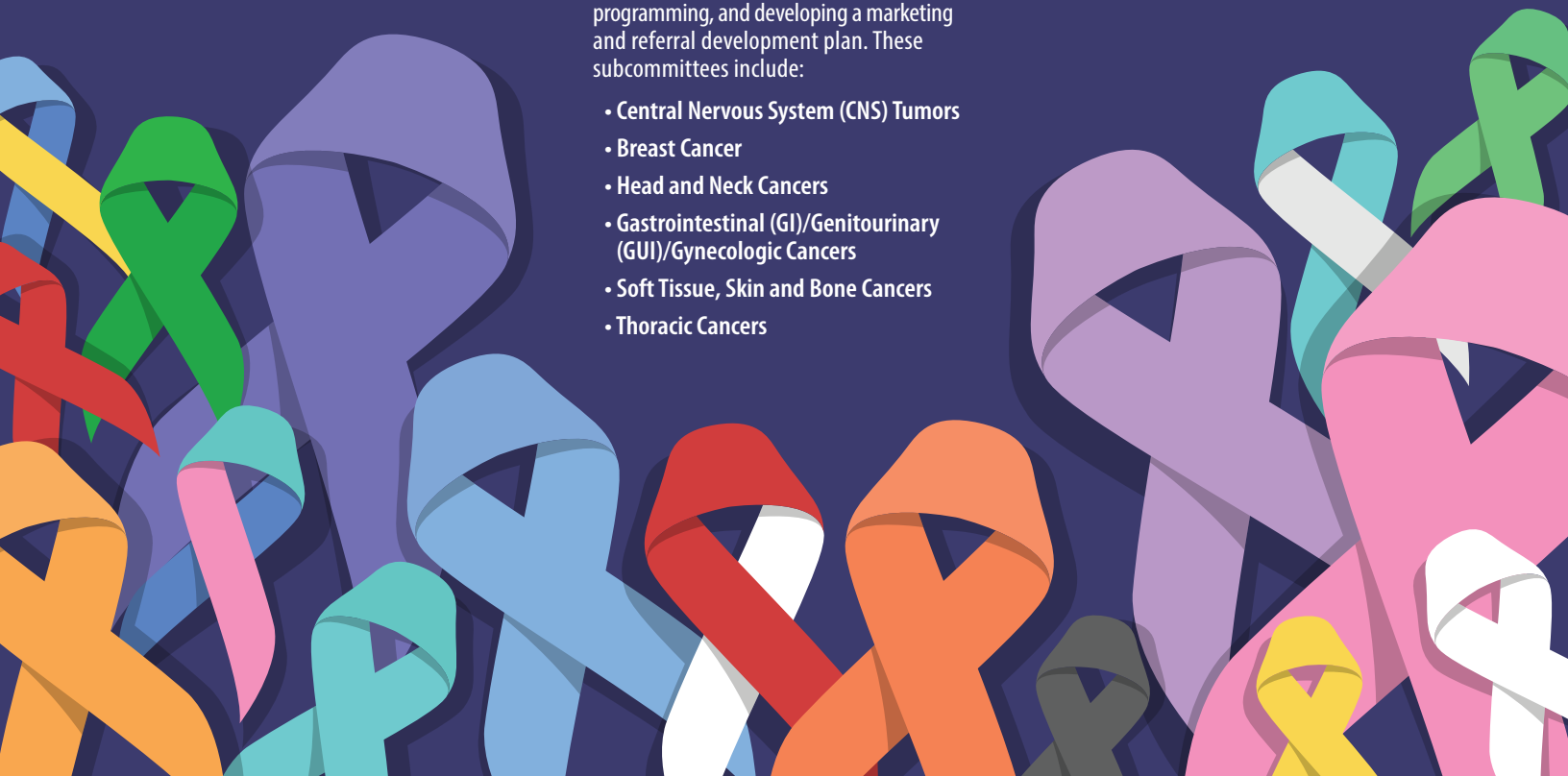
- Central Nervous System (CNS) Tumors
- Breast Cancer
- Head and Neck Cancers
- Gastrointestinal (GI)/Genitourinary (GUI)/Gynecologic Cancers
- Soft Tissue, Skin and Bone Cancers
- Thoracic Cancers

Future efforts will be focused on the needs of patients with hematologic conditions and endocrine malignancies

During our 2023 CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) Survey, we consulted with the survey team on our readiness to pursue a cancer rehab program. The input received affirmed the benefits of seeking CARF accreditation for cancer rehab and empowered us to use the accreditation standards as a roadmap for program development.

Our outpatient rehab services have historically cared for patients with cancer through well-developed services for prehab and post-surgical programs for breast, genitourinary (GU) and gastrointestinal cancers (GI). To refine and expand these in line with our overall cancer rehab vision, we have launched several initiatives for further clinical disease-specific program development. WakeMed Rehab continues the journey to implement holistic and comprehensive cancer rehab services to address improving the quality of life of our patients and our community.

We believe that our current framework for this strategic initiative allows us to continually reassess and make strategic improvements that optimize the use of our resources and keep up to date on innovations in cancer rehab care.





WAKEMED REHABILITATION HOSPITAL DATA

The entire WakeMed Rehab team thanks the providers, patients and families who support our efforts to provide high-quality care and service across our care continuum. The following data is derived from admission and discharge information from October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023.

REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

Admission Diagnosis

Cerebrovascular Accident (Stroke)	28%
Orthopaedic	16%
Spinal Cord Injury	9%
Brain Injury	11%
Debility	10%
Multiple Trauma	11%
Amputee	5%

Our Patients with Stroke

Total Number	412
Average Age	68
Average Length of Stay	19 days

Our Patients with Orthopaedic Conditions

Total Number	232
Average Age	70
Average Length of Stay	15 days

Our Patients with Spinal Cord Injury

Total Number	137
Average Age	59
Average Length of Stay	22 days

Our Patients with Brain Injury

Total Number	157
Average Age	61
Average Length of Stay	16 days

Our Patients with Multiple Trauma

Total Number	161
Average Age	49
Average Length of Stay	17 days

Our Patients with Amputations

Total Number	70
Average Age	60
Average Length of Stay	15 days

Pediatric Patients (ages 4-17)

Total Number	27
Average Age	12
Average Length of Stay	16 days

WakeMed 
Rehabilitation

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to WakeMed Rehab**

**Inpatient: 919-350-7876
Outpatient: 919-350-7000**



ARE YOU ON THE LIST

Be the First to Learn about New Specialty Rehab Programs for Your Patients

WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital and Outpatient Rehab locations lead the region in offering specialized programming for complex adult and pediatric as well as workers' compensation patients. Be the first to learn more about our services and programs. Send an email to dpowell@wakemed.org to join our email list. Don't worry! We are too busy with patients to fill your mailbox with emails. We will only share important news about new locations and services.