The Benefits of Aqua Therapy

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ABSTRACT

Aquatic Therapy is a form of therapy that is performed in the water, aiming to rehabilitate patients after injury or those with chronic illness (HealthSouth, 2015). Aqua therapy uses the resistance of water instead of weights, taking excess pressure off joints for better outcomes. Aquatic therapy can also be referred to as water therapy, aquatic rehabilitation, aqua therapy, pool therapy, therapeutic aquatic exercise or hydrotherapy. Certified aqua therapists as well as qualified health professionals can use aqua therapy as part of a treatment plan. Although it is cited in the literature, not very many patients and providers are aware of the benefits. A good amount of facilities that have pools have had to shut them down because of operational costs, and lack of use. Currently, there is no legislation that requires insurance companies to cover this treatment when prescribed or recommended.

The purpose of this poster is to help individuals to understand the benefits of aqua therapy, and all the positive outcomes it can provide. This poster is also to let individuals know that there is active legislation and advocacy going on right now to support aqua therapy.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Currently around 10 percent of the total world’s population, or roughly 650 million people, live with a disability. People with disabilities are often caught in a cycle of pain, depression, and stress. Disability can lead to social isolation, and the belief that exercise and fitness are impossible for them. Aquatic Therapy is able to break this cycle largely because of the unique properties of water.

What is Aqua Therapy?

Aquatic therapy is performed in the water, aiming to rehabilitate patients after injury or those with chronic illness. It uses the resistance of water instead of weights, taking excess pressure off joints for better outcomes.

What can it help with?

• Arthritis management and joint pain
• Gait analysis and correcting gait challenges
• Chronic back pain and lumbar stabilization, foot pain, knee pain.
• Short-term therapy with transition to land-based rehabilitation
• Spinal Cord Injury
• Amputees
• Brain Injury (Stroke, TBI, other types of brain injury)

OBJECTIVES

• Improve understanding of what aqua therapy is, and what the literature says about the benefits for individuals with different disabilities and conditions
• Learn about current legislation for aqua therapy and how it could impact individuals who could benefit from aqua therapy
• Enhance learning through personal case study example about how aqua therapy improved rehabilitation after severe TBI.

BENEFITS OF AQUA THERAPY

• Mooventhan and Nivethitha (2014) conducted a literature review on the benefits of aqua therapy on the body. Aquatic Therapy is proven to be beneficial for children with neuromotor impairments, for individuals suffering from pain or migraines. It has been found that water produces physiological/therapeutic effects on different parts of the body. Differing water temperatures and pressures showed significant changes in heart rate, blood pressure, metabolism, and a decrease in cerebral blood flow.
• Noh, Lim, Shin & Paik (2008) conducted a randomized controlled pilot trial and found that stroke patients who received aquatic therapy had improved postural balance and knee flexor strength compared to those who received traditional treatment.
• HealthSouth states that aquatic therapy can make exercise easier and less painful, because the forces on weight-bearing joints are reduced.

CURRENT LEGISLATION

Joint Committee on Financial Services Senate _______ No. 514

• An Act Providing for Coverage of Necessary Aqua Therapy. Any individual policy of accident or sickness insurance issued, delivered or renewed within the commonwealth pursuant to section 108 of this chapter, and any group blanket policy of accident or sickness insurance issued, delivered or renewed within the commonwealth pursuant to section 110 of this chapter, shall cover, without preauthorization, medically necessary aqua therapy provided by a licensed aqua therapist.

Sal N. DiDomenico
Middlesex and Suffolk
Julian Cyr
Cape and Islands
Linda Doreena Forry
First Suffolk
Kevin G. Honan
17th Suffolk
William N. Brownsburger
2nd Suffolk and Middlesex

MY PERSONAL STORY

When I was 17, I was involved in a motor vehicle accident. The accident left me with a wheelchair. At the rehab facility I went to, my neurologist prescribed me to take aqua therapy. Being able to stand in the water and move freely without the wheelchair gave me the confidence to know that I would eventually walk independently.

My balance improved, my coordination improved, my whole zest to get better improved. After I was discharged home, I began attending the residential brain injury school, Ivy Street. While at Ivy Street, I had written a bill with Senator Tolman nine years ago regarding Aqua Therapy. The bill sat in a stud for nine years. This year Senator Sal DiDomenico and I will be bringing the bill forward again to the Joint Committee of Financial Services.

My hope is to pass this bill to help individuals with mobility challenges, regain the ability to live life to the fullest.

REFERENCES

This poster displays the bill that I have written with Senator Sal De Domineco that is for health
insurances to cover the cost of aquatic therapy for individuals that sustain brain injuries. I have
personally had the benefit of having aqua therapy when I was in a wheelchair at Braintree Rehab, and
eventually was able to relearn how to walk. I believe that everyone should be given this chance – if
they are at a hospital that offers this type of therapy. I have previously worked with Senator Steven
Tolman on this, and will be trying again with Sal. We are all working together now, and will be bringing
it forward this spring.

The following chart shows the increase in Emergency Department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths
that are a result of head injuries across the country.

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<th>Hospitalizations</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:

- [National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey](#) — United States, 2001–2010 (Emergency Department Visits)
- [National Hospital Discharge Survey](#) — United States, 2001–2010 (Hospitalizations)
- [National Vital Statistics System Mortality Data](#) — United States, 2001–2010 (Deaths)

I believe that this bill I am hoping to pass, will be able to have a positive effect in changing the lives of TBI survivors.