

Easing Anxiety about Joint Replacement Surgery

By Joanna Chau

The Orthopaedic Service within the NCH Healthcare System performs more than 1,800 total joint replacement procedures a year.

According to a recent study of Medicare patients, NCH Healthcare System is the number one busiest hospital in Florida for joint replacement surgery and is in the top five in the country.

Even with its volume of procedures, each patient is still catered to from pre-operation to the day of surgery and throughout rehabilitation too.

One of the hospital's special care programs is its pre-operative patient education class, which focuses on preparation and alleviation of anxiety before joint replacement surgery.

"These classes provide education the patient and family needs to better prepare before and after surgery," said Suzanne Graziano, Director Restorative Microsystem: 5N Orthopedics, and 5S Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center. It also helps to put patients at ease and really empowers them."

Patients are encouraged to attend the two-hour class designed for knee and hip replacement a week before surgery. For the first hour, Graziano talks about the surgery, pre and postoperative care, pain management and the recovery process. During the second hour, patients interact with staff therapists who show them how to do rehabilitation exercises, familiarize them with equipment and answer their questions.

"First of all, you recognize people



when you get to the hospital, which is always comforting," said Sara Baldwin, a physical therapist who has taught the class for 10 years. "Secondly, you know what to expect when you do exercises and work with the machines."

Ken Ekberg attended the class before having total knee replacement surgery in November. Ekberg has had several surgeries before lessening his anxiety, but he was still unsure of what to expect for a knee replacement procedure until he took the class.

"The attention to pre-op care was impressive," said Ekberg who now volunteers to discuss his experience during classes. "The whole process was outlined beforehand. It all made for a very good experience."

Ekberg thinks the classes are also beneficial to mitigate preconceived notions.

"One of the things with people who have total replacements is that they all know someone who had one." Ekberg said. "That can be good news or bad news. This gives the right information from one source and the most important source --- the provider."

A pre-surgery class gathers about 15 patients and their families and the classes are held at the hospital's downtown campus. They enjoy snacks and refreshments while asking important questions about what they can eat before surgery, what medications they can take, how much pain will follow surgery and how to handle it. Sandy Cannon had her knee replaced April 27th. Although she already knew much of the information discussed in class, she says it helped put her at ease with the thought of having surgery.

"It just made me more comfortable because I'm not sick a lot," Cannon said. "I've only been in the hospital when I had my two boys and that was a long time ago. So, just getting a feeling of what to expect, it definitely lessened my anxiety and put me at ease."

Classes are offered every Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the hospital's downtown campus inside the Telford Building and from

to 4:30 p.m. at the North Naples inside the Brookdale Center by Aging.



Physical therapist, Sara Baldwin, demonstrates how to use the CPM machine, a device designed to bend and straighten the knee, on Sandy Cannon, a knee replacement patient.

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