

## Residential care rewarding

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by ANNE LECLERC



employment in a residential care facility can be very rewarding! After working in a 52-bed hospital in northwestern British Columbia for over two decades, I accepted the challenge of working at St. Vincents Langara ... a large urban residential care facility caring for 221 elders.

The facility is run by Providence HealthCare, a faith-based organization. My experience as a working manager in a busy small town hospital ensured I had mastered many of the clinical and supervisory skills required for the job. It was explained to me that the physiotherapists role would be primarily consultative in nature, performing assessments and formulating recommendations.

The setting is such that the allied health staff works closely together to form a strong team of dedicated professionals striving to ensure the elders receive the best possible care for their -golden years." Each caregiver displays compassion towards the residents. The result is a high quality establishment ensuring comfort, enjoyment and maximizing the residents abilities for as long as possible.

Diagnoses can often be complex in nature. For example, a resident may have a combination of chronic diseases such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and dementia. Initial assessments are performed by the physiotherapist to determine a baseline functional assessment. The residents transfer ability is determined, and care guides are completed specifying the appropriate methods to be used during patient transfers (i.e. total mechanical lift, sit-to-stand lift, one person assist, etc) thereby minimizing the risk of injury to the staff and resident.

Ambulation and rehabilitation potential are identified early on, and appropriate steps are taken to facilitate these treatment areas. Mobility aids are prescribed when deemed appropriate by the physiotherapist. Exercise programs can be tailored to the individual needs of a resident, and family and companions can be coached to help the resident with the individual exercises.

The physiotherapist works closely with the rehabilitation assistants in the management of the group exercise programs. At our facility, there are numerous established exercise programs such as weight training, hemi exercise, and aerobic exercise classes. -Lets dance" is a fun mobility program conducted in collaboration with the discipline of music therapy. Two new programs are -Balance Training" and -Get Moving Outdoors."

Elders are screened for suitability for programs by the physiotherapist. All classes are well attended by

residents and programs are reviewed regularly. The rehabilitation therapists provide a stimulating exercise environment that is both safe and fun for the residents.

Anne Leclerc  
Physiotherapist  
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The physiotherapist may also be consulted on an individual basis for pain management, bed positioning, respiratory care, footwear assessment, or to conduct a comprehensive post fall assessment.

Other skills required for this role include competence in program planning, effective communication skills, and an innovative mind. Problem solving abilities are often challenged.

If you like to work with elders in a supportive, satisfying environment, I recommend considering residential care as an alternative. It is challenging job and our skills as allied health professional are so important and appreciated! 

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