

Physical Therapy: It's About You...Feeling Better!



Physical therapy is the treatment or rehabilitation of physical injuries and disabilities through physical techniques such as exercise, joint manipulation or massage. At TMH, our PT department consists of four physical therapists, one physical therapist assistant and one occupational therapist. (Turn the page to meet them!)

We are currently updating our equipment and services to provide more comprehensive care to area residents right here in Craig. For example, we have recently added:

- manual orthopedic physical therapy of the spine and extremities
- sports physical therapy
- injury prevention and wellness
- equine therapy
- lymphedema therapy
- custom foot orthotics

(Lymphedema, also known as lymphatic obstruction, is unusual fluid retention and swelling, often in an arm or leg, that doesn't clear up on its own. It is often experienced by patients who've undergone cancer treatments.)

If you have questions or comments about PT at TMH or would like to schedule a free physical therapy screening assessment, we invite you to call us at 970-824-5992. **You will receive a free hot/cold therapy pack at your screening.**

The Goal: Reduced Pain and Functional Impairment

When patients start rehabilitative therapy at TMH, they meet with a therapist to plan a program that will help them heal. But they also fill out a paper questionnaire. The questionnaire asks questions about the severity of the pain and physical limitations and yields an impairment rating.

Then, partway through their course of therapy, patients complete the questionnaire again. If their impairment rating isn't improving as expected, TMH's therapists will adjust the treatment plan.

After the last therapy session, patients fill out the questionnaire one last time.

"The goal is zero pain and impairment," said Dr. Luke Geer, PT department manager.

The questionnaire process and ratings are required by Medicare to ensure that patients are benefiting from their care. But most important, it's a way to measure quality and give every patient personalized treatment.

"The same treatment plan doesn't work for everyone," said Luke. "Of course, we also talk to our patients throughout their treatment, but the questionnaire tends to be a more objective measure of their improvement. It's a tool to help us make sure we're helping each and every patient as much as possible."



The PT Husband-and-Wife Team

Meet Luke and Erin Geer!



Luke Geer, PT, DPT

Colorado natives Luke Geer and his wife, Erin Geer, are both physical therapists. They met in college, completing their undergraduate degrees at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley and continuing on to the physical therapy doctoral program at Regis University in Denver.

Not only are they married, they've worked side-by-side for five years. And now we're thrilled to welcome them to TMH.

Before moving to Craig, they practiced in Grand Junction, Rangely and rural central Colorado. "Our desire has always been to live in Colorado and be close to family," said Luke, who is the new PT department manager.



Erin Geer, PT, DPT

In addition to her general PT work, Erin is certified in lymphedema therapy (see definition on front cover). Luke specializes in manual orthopedic physical therapy of the spine and extremities and "really likes to treat tension headaches!"

As manager, Luke says that his department is here to help Craig-area residents return to pain-free living.

Luke and Erin are happy to be here in Craig. They love the small-town lifestyle and look forward to raising their two little girls—and a third baby on the way!—in our community.

TMH Rehab Team



Carol Sitlington, MPT

20 years of experience

Specialties: pediatrics, therapeutic riding instructor, equine facilitated therapy (hippotherapy)



Michele Chalmers, OT

22 years of experience

Specialties: upper extremity rehabilitation, home evaluation, ergonomics, adaptive equipment for home safety and cognitive training



Bridget Sanders, PTA

4 years of experience

Specialties: inpatient, outpatient and home health therapy under the direction of a physical therapist



Chris Trujillo, MPT

30 years of experience

Specialties: inpatient, outpatient and home health physical therapy

Occupational Therapy Isn't About Your Job...

The first thing that TMH occupational therapist Michele Chalmers would like to clear up is that occupational therapy has nothing to do with your job or career. In this case, you can think of the word “occupational” as meaning “the things you do every day to take care of yourself.”

“Occupational therapy (OT for short) helps patients with physical limitations due to surgery, injury or illness regain the ability to live independently again,” she said.

In other words, Michele might help a patient practice buttoning his shirt, putting on his socks, retrieving a pan from a lower cabinet, and getting into and out of his car.

Michele has been an OT for 22 years. For TMH, she works with patients who are hospitalized, patients who come to the clinic for outpatient therapy, and patients in their own homes.

“I love working with patients on home safety,” said Michele. “After they’ve had joint replacement or a stroke, for example, I can help them learn to use adaptive equipment like bath chairs and reachers so they can stay independent in their own homes.”

“I work with a lot of people who have fallen. I can help them reduce the likelihood of another fall by strengthening their core muscles and using the right equipment to do what they need to do.”



What is Equine Therapy?

Equine therapy (also called “hippotherapy” because “hippos” means “horse” in Greek) is a form of physical/occupational therapy in which patients ride horses, under the supervision of a therapist, to help them with balance, motor skills, core strength, sensory processing and range of motion. TMH therapist Carol Sitlington uses hippotherapy with some of her patients. TMH patients ride at the indoor arena built by Dr. Scott Ellis.

Physical Therapy: What Can I Expect?

People who’ve never had physical therapy before are often unsure what to expect. Here’s a quick peek.

First visit: Your physical therapist will go over your medical history with you and evaluate you physically, checking things such as your strength, flexibility, coordination and posture. Together you will decide on goals for your course of treatment. You might begin therapy at this visit, or you might begin at the second visit.

A normal visit: Each visit is designed to meet the specific needs of the patient. Generally, your therapist will guide you in simple motions, exercise and other techniques (such as massage). A session usually lasts an hour. As with any exercise, you might feel a little sore the next day.

How often: The treatment plan varies for different conditions, but patients usually come anywhere from once a week to three times a week for PT. Lower back pain, for example, can often be helped in just a few sessions. And in general, frequency decreases as time passes. The total treatment period can range from one or two sessions up to a few months depending on the level and severity of the injury or dysfunction.

Education: An important part of PT is educating patients about exercises, proper body motions and special equipment to implement at home to complement the therapy and to prevent problems from reoccurring. The skills you learn in PT will become part of your daily life.



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750 Hospital Loop
Craig, CO 81625
(970) 824-9411

www.thememorialhospital.com

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Could Therapy Help You?

Physical and occupational therapies help patients with a variety of challenges. While occupational therapy often addresses problems in the upper half of the body, physical therapy is intended to rehabilitate injuries and physical dysfunctions from head-to-toe.

Here are just a few of the injuries and chronic health conditions in which pain, weakness, range of motion limitations, and other problems can be helped by physical therapy:

- neck pain
- back pain
- joint pain
- plantar fasciitis
- tension headaches
- spinal stenosis
- shoulder pain
- vertigo
- balance disorders
- lymphedma
- stroke rehabilitation
- neurological problems



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REHABILITATION SERVICES

Centennial Mall
1111 W. Victory Way
Craig, CO 81625
(970) 824-5992



Could therapy help you? Talk to your health care provider, or call our therapy office at 970-824-5992.