

Keynote Speakers

Anna Choo Elmers



Anna Choo Elmers, J.D., M.D. is an attending physician at Shepherd Center in Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States. She joined Shepherd Center in 2009.

Shepherd Center is a private, non-profit hospital specializing in medical treatment, research, and rehabilitation for people with spinal cord injury, brain injury, multiple sclerosis, spine, and chronic pain, and other neuromuscular conditions. Founded in 1975 by the Shepherd family, Shepherd Center is ranked by U.S. News & World Report among the top 10 rehabilitation hospitals in the nation. In its more than four decades, Shepherd Center has grown from a six-bed rehabilitation unit to a

world-renowned, 152-bed hospital. Treating more than 740 inpatients, nearly 280 day program patients, and more than 7,100 outpatients each year in more than 46,000 visits, Shepherd Center has a culture like no other.

While traditional rehabilitation focuses on physical, occupational, and speech therapy, it is those things BEYOND THERAPY that bring healing, hope, and a return to living. These include Shepherd Center’s therapeutic recreation program, chaplaincy program, Adventure Skills Workshop, and dinner clubs, as well as events tailored to our adolescent patients, including prom, homecoming, graduations, Project Rollway, and the Haunted Gym. As the bridge between “I can’t and I can,” Shepherd Center meets patients where they are, then shows them that despite their injuries, they can return to a fulfilled and happy life.

Keynote Abstracts



Beyond Therapy

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INTRODUCTION

When we think in terms of traditional rehabilitation, physical, occupation, and speech therapy come to mind. However, to restore the whole person, we must go beyond therapy. To provide a sense of normalcy and show those who have had life changing catastrophic events that life can still be full, we must think outside the box and utilize therapeutic recreation to find creative ways to reintegrate persons with spinal cord injury into the community.

METHODS

To investigate the association of therapeutic recreation (TR) interventions during inpatient rehabilitation for patients with traumatic spinal cord injury (SCI), SCIREhab public use datasets were used to compare outcomes at 1 and 5 years based on time in Recreation Therapy. The treatment group consisted of SCIREhab participants who received significant (>20 hours) inpatient TR, n=476. Propensity score 1-to-1 matching constructed the control group, n=476 from the remaining SCIREhab participants. Independent means tests were used to identify significant differences in characteristics and outcomes between groups at one- and five-years post injury.

RESULT

At one- and five-years post injury, the treatment group had significantly higher rates of employment/school, community participation, life satisfaction, and greater recreation participation. At one year post injury, the treatment group exhibited more residing at home, less depression, and less rehospitalization. These differences were neutralized at five years post injury. Both groups saw improvement in most outcomes from one to five years post injury. However, percentage of patients or item scores for treatment group were consistently higher.

CONCLUSION

More time spent in TR during inpatient rehabilitation is strongly associated with improved community participation, health and function, and recreational participation post injury for persons with SCI.