

New rehab tool at clinic

Angelique Rodrigues
Examiner Staff

A new, local invention is helping Edmontonians regain use of their limbs at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital.

The invention, an Ipad-like tabletop with a touch-sensitive screen, was created by a team of Glenrose researchers, technologists, and occupational therapists and developed by University of Alberta science student Michelle Annett.

"It's basically a large surface designed specifically to engage patients in their rehabilitation exercises," explains Darrell Goertzen, technology service leader at the Glenrose.

The technology helps patients using upper limb motor therapy to regain strength, co-ordination and reactive skills. Using the screen, rehabilitation patients can enjoy therapeutic activities using interactive

games like popping virtual balloons, finger-painting and arranging family pictures.

"We basically handed them a wish list for the activity tables and they really delivered," says Goertzen of Annett and her team of developers.

Typically, rehabilitation patients perform exercises such as stretching, reaching for items, and wiping a table with a cloth as part of their therapy.

Goertzen says the tabletop offers endless therapeutic possibilities for patients and that the interactive games serve as motivation for the user. Since the \$6,000 tool was first introduced in July, nearly 40 patients have benefited from its unique therapy options.

"The patients already using it are engaged, they're interested and enjoying their rehab," he says. "It helps them to persist in their exercising. It's helps them

to heal."

The technology, which can track the slightest change in hand movement and reaction, also allows health professionals to better measure their patient's progress.

The Glenrose has already made a request for more tabletops, as well as for another application that would implement the same technology for lower limb rehabilitation.

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"Technology is the future of rehabilitation," says Goertzen. "We are lucky to be working in

partnership with the University of Alberta. They make it all possible."



CODIE MGLACHLAN Sun Media
Michelle Annett, a U of A student, demonstrates a touch screen for rehabilitation patients at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital last week.

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