



“Stronger Every Day”

# PT Matters

Holiday 2009

A Publication of McDonald Physical Therapy & Sports Rehabilitation Center



## Taking Charge of Your Healthcare

I have always felt strongly about the importance of taking charge of healthcare choices. I don't know if I believed it as much as I should have, but our recent experience has made us even stronger believers in the importance of taking charge of our healthcare. On January 8, 2009, my wife Maura was diagnosed with Stage 1, T2, N0 rectal cancer.

When we learned this, we quickly contacted our friends, personal and professional, and asked if anyone knew about this particular cancer. Because I work in healthcare, I do have an advantage. Maura called some of her cousins who are nurses for their recommendations on physicians. Luckily, a physician introduced us to a friend who had had this cancer in a more serious stage. He educated us on the importance of researching physicians and cancer hospitals, keeping a folder for every test result and never leaving a clinic or hospital without the original or a copy of the test results.

This last idea was foreign to me as a healthcare provider in the orthopedic world. Most patients in our area have to work hard to get their chart information and test results. Getting the results the day of the tests is rare! As we began our journey (which was longer and more complicated than we could have imagined) we found we could get most of our information the day the tests were taken!

We started at a recommended cancer center and ended up visiting a total of FOUR centers! The trips to these centers were emotional rollercoaster rides for all of us. We went from feeling relieved (during our first physician consultation) because of a great prognosis which was extremely premature, to feeling fearful of death (when the possibility of liver cancer was also introduced), to feeling more confident at our chances of a great recovery. We eventually chose a highly recommended surgeon who was experienced with low-lying rectal tumors. We also discovered he had done his fellowship under someone considered to be one of the nation's best at rectal cancer surgery.

What made this experience with rectal cancer so nerve-racking was the fact that we had at least four different treatment plans recommended after visiting four cancer centers! The top three were: 1. surgery and colostomy for life; 2. chemo and radiation, surgery, colostomy for nine months with additional chemo afterwards; and 3. surgery with ileostomy for three months and then a reversal of the ileostomy. We chose option 3, and things have gone well.

As you can see, it was well worth our while to search for several opinions. Sometimes the question should not just be: "Will I live or be able to function in my daily life?" Maybe the question should also be: "Will my quality of life be as close to normal as possible?"



Fran McDonald, PT, DPT

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**Providing the Best in Patient Care — Since 1989**

## Fran's Message (CONT FROM PAGE 1)

I have learned through this experience that it is wise to ask our physicians, physical therapists, and other healthcare providers whether we will be back to our normal activities following whatever procedure we have. Ask how long the recovery might take. Get more than one opinion. Find out if you will be able to raise your arm with normal strength after a particular shoulder procedure, or kneel and work in the garden after a knee surgery. If the answer is "No," take the time to find another healthcare provider outside the group you are in for a second opinion. You might even find that there is someone who can perform the same surgery, the same physical therapy, or the same treatment with much better quality of life results!

*"How will I live or be able to function in my daily life?" Maybe the question should also be: "Will my quality of life be as close to normal as possible?"*

If you don't think it worth your time, talk with my wife. If she believed her second physician or failed to push for more opinions, she would have possibly been free of cancer, but would be wearing a colostomy pouch for life! I know patients who have gotten shoulder and knee surgery and cannot lift their arms or bend their knees to work in the garden, merely because they didn't take the time to find the physician who might have more expertise in the specific area of their injury. Ask your surgeons how many of these particular surgeries they have performed in the last year and on what percentage of their patients they performed that type of surgery.

Listening to friends does help, but getting feedback from friends who are healthcare providers in that particular area increases your chances for a much better lifestyle. If you wanted to know who could fix your car as cost effectively and successfully as possible, I could give you a recommendation, but a friend in the car industry would have a better idea!

As I end my newsletter, I will tell you that our family has been blessed. Maura has had her surgery, experienced living with an ileostomy and is recovering happily from the reversal of it. She did not need the chemo, radiation, or the colostomy for life. We thank God for all of the people who answered our questions and encouraged us to continue to further explore treatment choices. If we had not done so, she would not have the quality of life she now has.

We realize we are fortunate because we are in the medical field, have insurance, and have easier access to inside information because of our connections. Nevertheless, I do believe we all need to stand up and take our health concerns in our own hands. We all need to question and search for at least one other surgical opinion or one other physician consult if we are questioning the diagnosis or treatment plan. If we all take on this responsibility, we increase our chances of having longer and better quality lives. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

*Fran* 😊

## 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Congratulations Sandy Ohime on 20 years of outstanding service. Sandy started at McDonald Physical Therapy in June of 1989. Her responsibilities included reception, secretarial duties, scheduling, billing, and "treat making" for patients and staff. Twenty years later, Sandy is a member of the accounts receivable department (and she retains her position as "treat maker"). Sandy is a dedicated runner and has also earned the honor of winning the most creative costume award every Halloween for the past several years. We are grateful to have Sandy on our team.



## Thanksgiving and Holiday Food Baskets

For the past 12 years, McDonald Physical Therapy has collected and delivered Thanksgiving and holiday baskets to hundreds of needy families throughout the area. Each year, the staff and patients contribute food and monetary donations to help make this possible. We would like to thank all of our patients for supporting this great cause.



**McDonald Physical Therapy would like to thank the entire Michiana Community for voting McDonald Physical Therapy the "2009 Reader's Choice Award for Best Physical Therapy Practice". We were honored to be chosen and we value your recognition of our commitment to Excellence in Patient Care. Don't forget to vote for us again when the ballots come out. Thanks!**

## St. Joseph Hospital Board Appointment

Fran McDonald, our President and CEO, has been appointed to serve on the Board of Directors for the Foundation of Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center. The Foundation coordinates charitable contributions and directs designated gifts to the Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center. These funds support nursing education, departments of the hospital, and many outreach programs. Fran is truly enjoying this opportunity to serve.

Over the years, the work of the board has led to the development of new programs, more accessible healthcare services, and acquisition of the most advanced medical technology available.



## CAN YOU FIND YOUR THERAPIST IN THE PICTURE?

Every year, the McDonald Physical Therapy team enjoys getting dressed up for Halloween. In the spirit of Halloween, the group goes all out and competes for best costume and most creative costumes. This year our winners were Kaes Kamman, Neringa Snyder, and Sandy Ohime.



## The staff at McDonald Physical Therapy has been actively involved in several community initiatives to raise awareness and funds while having a great deal of fun in the process.

### Michiana on the Move

Michiana on the Move was sponsored by the YMCA of Michiana to encourage and promote the health and well-being of our community. The goal was to mobilize the Michiana community to reach a cumulative 100,000 miles generated by activity within four weeks! Our McDonald Physical Therapy staff embraced the challenge, donned pedometers, devised exercise plans, and had a great time competing against each other while cheering each other on to healthier lifestyles!

### Truck Pull for Public Education Foundation

Twenty staff members, along with family and friends participated in the Public Education Foundation's First Annual Truck Pull, benefiting the South Bend School's reading programs. In October, teams from all over Michiana competed against each other, pulling a tractor trailer twelve feet against the clock for trophies and bragging rights! The McDonald Physical Therapy team came in 4th out of 9 in the co-ed division. Everyone's "gearing" up for the next year's effort!

## We are Proud to Congratulate . . .



Pam Walkowski, Stephanie Smith, Ken Mack, Sarah Kovatch, Heather Rathbun, Mike Stefaniuk, and Sandy Ohime for their participation in our community races. Going the extra mile has always been important to our staff in and out of the clinic.

Doug McDonald for completing a 160-mile cycling challenge across Indiana with several members of our community. Congratulations Doug!





20<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
1989-2009

Merry Christmas  
&  
Happy Holidays

1005 Hickory Rd.  
South Bend, IN 46615  
Office: 574-233-5754  
Monday - Thursday  
7 am - 8 pm  
Friday 7 am - 5 pm

"Stronger Every Day"



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