

Pulmonary rehabilitation can improve health for patients with lung disease

21 March 2016, by Laura Dawahare

Kentucky is well known for basketball and horses. Unfortunately, it is also well known as a "smoker's state" as more than one quarter of all Kentuckians smoke. That translates to poor health: we have the highest rate of death in the U.S. from chronic lower respiratory tract diseases.

Pulmonary rehabilitation has been shown to help improve quality of life for individuals with lung disease such as chronic [obstructive pulmonary disease](#) (COPD), interstitial pulmonary fibrosis, or [pulmonary hypertension](#).

What, exactly, is pulmonary rehabilitation? It is a comprehensive multidisciplinary program for [patients](#) whose [chronic respiratory diseases](#) impede their ability to participate in daily life activities. It helps patients understand their disease better, self-manage common complications and know when to call for help.

According to the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation (AACVPR), patients in a certified pulmonary rehab program report decreased breathlessness and fatigue, increased exercise tolerance and enhanced quality of life. Patients who complete the program also report fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are commonly associated with chronic lung diseases.

At AACVPR-Certified Cardiopulmonary Rehab Clinics, a team of physicians, nurses, exercise physiologists and dietitians work with patients to tailor a treatment plan specific to their needs. The program can help restore strength and endurance, reduce disease symptoms such as shortness of breath, and increase understanding of disease self-management.

This typically involves an initial assessment, exercise training, self-management education, psychosocial support and an outcomes assessment. Program duration varies based on

individual goals and progress, but usually requires two or three two-hour sessions per week for between eight and 12 weeks. Many health insurance plans cover [pulmonary rehabilitation](#) programs, as it's been demonstrated that patients who participate in such programs actually end up needing less health care in the long run.

A patient care team facilitates therapeutic support among participants, their family members and friends and creates an environment where people learn from each other. Group discussions led by experts share information about the disease process, teach breathing techniques, and provide nutritional support to complement supervised exercise training. Improvements in patient function can be sustained after completion of the program through the Optimal Health Wellness training program.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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