

Harmonica Therapy – Music to Patient’s Lungs

Pulmonary Rehab Patients Use Harmonicas to Breathe Easier

Lafayette, Colo. – Nov. 12, 2014 – Felice Heffenger, a respiratory therapist at Good Samaritan Medical Center, sits in a circle with five pulmonary rehabilitation patients and instructs them to pull out their harmonicas. On her count, they inhale and exhale into their instruments. They haven’t made it through an entire song yet, but that’s because this is only their third meeting. But the benefits will last a lifetime.

Playing the harmonica is a new respiratory therapy at Good Samaritan Medical Center for people with breathing problems, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. COPD causes air to be trapped in the lungs because of inflammation, airway collapse, and loss of lung elasticity.

The program started a month ago and Good Samaritan is the only hospital in Boulder County using harmonicas for this type of therapy. There are a few harmonica respiratory therapy programs in the United States, but the program at Good Samaritan is only the second in Colorado.

“The harmonica mimics pursed-lip breathing and provides an expiratory resistance that makes patients have to use their diaphragm intercostal muscles more,” says Heffenger. “Those are the main muscles you use for respiration. By exercising those muscles, it makes it easier for them to breathe.”

Heffenger encourages her patients to play their harmonicas every day, just as they would with their normal breathing exercises. Though the program is in its infancy, some patients have already experienced improved lung function.

In addition to medical benefits, the one-hour therapy sessions also provide social benefits. “Many people with chronic lung diseases may feel anxiety about going out and doing things,” says Heffenger. “When you’re in a group of other people who are in a similar circumstance, there’s a lot of good support there, and it helps bring down the anxiety a bit.”

[Video: <http://youtu.be/77R3A0IS4-M>]

To learn more about our rehabilitation and therapy programs, visit www.goodsamaritancolorado.org.

About Good Samaritan Medical Center

Good Samaritan Medical Center opened December 1, 2004 and is a community-based, 234 bed acute-care hospital located in Lafayette, CO. The medical center is part of the SCL Health, which is headquartered in Denver, CO. Good Samaritan Medical Center’s premier services include Level II Trauma, Comprehensive Cancer Center, Heart and Neurovascular Center, robotic surgery, Primary Stroke Center, Integrative Health and Healing Center, “baby friendly” birthing center and emergency services including a Senior Emergency Room. To learn more, visit www.goodsamaritancolorado.org.