

# Connections

A PUBLICATION FOR BAYSTATE HEALTH TEAM MEMBERS

## Cardiac Rehabilitation Helps Patients Get Their (Healthier) Lives Back

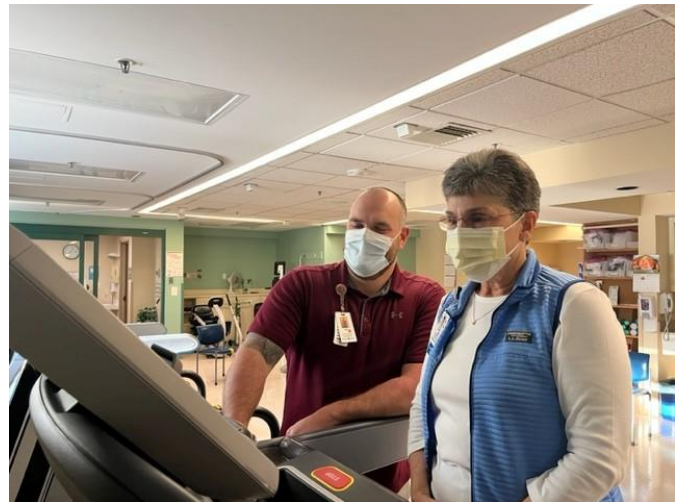
When patients leave the hospital after having a heart attack, angioplasty (a minimally invasive procedure to widen an artery to improve blood flow), heart failure, other heart surgery or other heart and vascular issues, the recovery has just begun.

Cheryl May, RN, Cardiac Rehab in the Cardiovascular Rehabilitation Department at Baystate Franklin Medical Center is there to help these patients get the exact follow-up care that they need.

“These patients have had some sort of cardiac ‘event,’” Cheryl says. “Our team is here to help them get to their ‘new normal.’ I love watching patients come back from their setbacks, watching them get well and strong again.”

Cheryl works with a care team that includes Certified Exercise Physiologist Joel Wright, Lynne Podlesney (administrative assistant), and Patti Bliznak, BSN (cardiac rehab nurse). And beyond the department, the team includes doctors, surgeons, nurses, and anyone else who had been involved with the patient throughout their care journey. They look at a patient’s medical history and consider their goals and abilities when developing a program.

Each patient receives an individualized plan tailored to reduce morbidity, mortality, and disability from cardiac and pulmonary disease (they work with patients with lung issues as well). That plan includes not only exercise, but education, research, and lifestyle changes



*Cheryl May with Joel Wright*

including eating a heart-healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight and quitting smoking.

“Most importantly, we’re working to improve the quality of each patient’s life, and that might look very different for each patient,” Cheryl says. “We work very closely with each patient for weeks. We promote heart health and help them change their lifestyles to lower the risk for future heart problems.”

Studies show that cardiac rehab can improve overall strength and stamina in a heart patient, including improving their ability to return to work, enjoy activities they did before, and lower the number of returns to the hospital. A patient may start out very slow, because they’ve just had major surgery, but will eventually build up to a place where little by little they can do much more.

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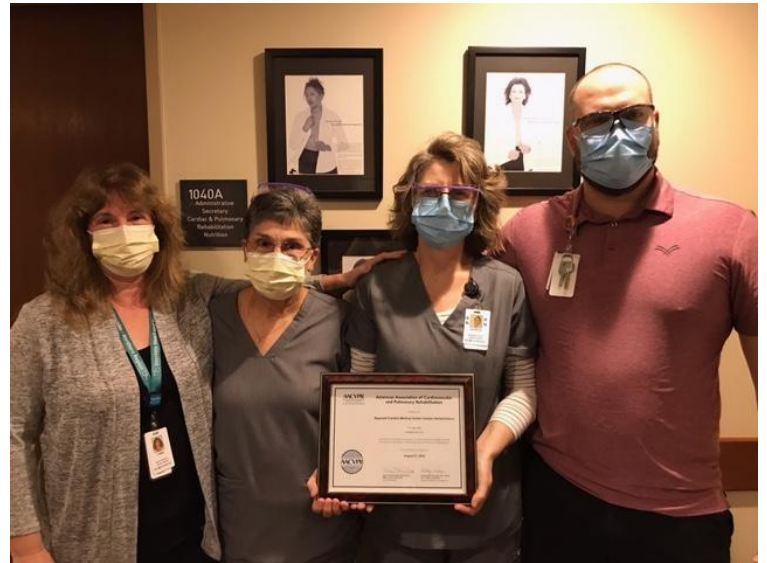
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“Even working with a patient on the treadmill for several weeks can restore their confidence and well-being and help them live longer, more productive lives,” Joel Wright says.

“We have a cohesive group here,” Cheryl says. “We provide the most positive and therapeutic environment for patients and ourselves. We form connections that last and that all means so much.”

***“We’re working to improve the quality of each patient’s life, and that might look very different for each patient.”***

**-Cheryl May, RN, BFMCC Cardiac Rehab**



*(From left) Cardiac Rehab team members Lynne Podlesney, administrative assistant; Cheryl May, RN; Patti Bliznak, BSN; and Joel Wright, certified exercise physiologist when BFMCC Cardiac Rehab received its three-year certification from the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program.*