

Progressive Therapy Center adds massage to the healing tool box

BY CONCHITA SMITH

Progressive Therapy Center director Greg Welch had an unusual problem to deal with; his orthopedic rehabilitation patients were so satisfied with clinical services they often wanted to continue making appointments even after the successful completion of their treatment.

So, as a way to complement patient therapy and also to invite the community to experience the healthful benefits of massage, he hired experienced and licensed massage therapists to offer Saturday massage service, from Shiatsu to Swedish.

"One of our ideas was that one service could help the other," said Welch. "If someone is coming in for therapy, we might notice they could benefit from a deep tissue massage as well. And if someone comes in for a massage and realizes their shoulder has been hurting for a while, we can possibly use some therapy and go back and forth to help them heal."

Progressive Therapy Center, 12651 S. Dixie Hwy., treats adults, seniors, athletes, and young people for orthopedic and sports-related injuries.

"Neck, back, shoulders, wrists, hands, knees,



Pictured is the Progressive Therapy Center staff (front row l-r) Chris Ellenberg, Shelley Vidal, Jackie Welch, Marjorie Hereter, Jessica Brea; (back row l-r) Grace Jaffet, Iris Alfonso, Karen Fourquet, Greg Welch, Jorge Santos and Nick Concepcion.

ankles, feet, any orthopedic condition we can treat," said Welch.

The center is a unique resource for convalescing patients because they offer extensive manual therapy for joint mobilization and stretching, rather than simply set people up on machines to do the work for them.

"Our physical therapists average about 15 years of experience, and what we do is specific and individual," said Welch. "On a day-to-day basis, treatment needs will change. We have a wide range of expertise in what we can do to help get patients back to their best."

Massages available include Shiatsu, which works with acupressure principles or meridian pathways on the body; Swedish, or relaxing massage; sports massage, for athletes who may need work on a specific muscle group; and deep tissue for enhancing circulation and weight loss. Often a combination of massage types are practiced depending on patient needs.

"The most gratifying aspect of the work is to heal," said massage therapist Toribio Tijerino. "When you start to work on somebody and they tell you 'that hurts there or that hurts' and by the end of the massage the pain is gone and they look at you like 'what did you do?' that gives you a real sense of accomplishment."

Massage Therapist Michele Salsgiver is legally blind and believes it is an asset in the

career that has become her life's work. "Intuitively I can touch a body and know what is going on because of my own condition," said Salsgiver. "Being legally blind gives me an added gift of touch."

Center director Welch was always sports oriented, playing soccer and water polo before receiving his occupational therapy degree from FIU. His Masters Degree in pastoral studies from St. Thomas University has allowed him to embrace the entire mind, body and spirit approach to healing.

"I wanted to have a career where I could help people and be connected to sports," said Welch. "When I went back to school for my graduate degree, I was able to develop the spiritual side in addition to the physical and the physiological. It gives me a nice well-rounded approach."

Welch says an integral part of recovery is addressing the emotional side of healing, along with the physical. His team focuses on developing a friendly rapport with patients and cultivating a familial environment at the center.

"It is amazing that we can come to work and love what we do," said Welch. "We have a group of people that comes to work every day, and we have a lot of fun and we get to help people."

For more information, call 305-232-9222 or go to <progressivetherapy.net>.



Michele Salsgiver, a licensed massage therapist.