

BROOKS[®]
Rehabilitation

BEYOND

SPRING / SUMMER 2024



EMPOWERING
INJURED WORKERS



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#WeAreBrooks



Doug Baer



Doug Baer and Josh Schuette recently participated in a grueling Spartan race for Ainsley's Angels of America, a national charitable organization that has a mission of inclusion without limits. Baer and Schuette assisted four adapted athletes in wheelchairs cross the finish line after navigating military-style obstacles like getting over 4-foot high walls and crawling in mud under barbed wire.

OUR EMPLOYEES ARE OUR BIGGEST ASSET AT BROOKS.

The amazing care we provide to our patients and families would not be possible without them. We, therefore, understand the importance in helping employees from other organizations get back to their highest level of recovery. That's why having an exceptional Workers' Compensation program for injured workers is so important.

We bring past Comp Laude winners Josh Schuette and Nick Fonner together with a team of experts all dedicated to helping workers get better. As with all our patients, they have access to the same level of expertise, technology and innovation we're known for. We're honored that companies like Paradigm, Disney, the City of Jacksonville and many others trust us with their most valuable assets.

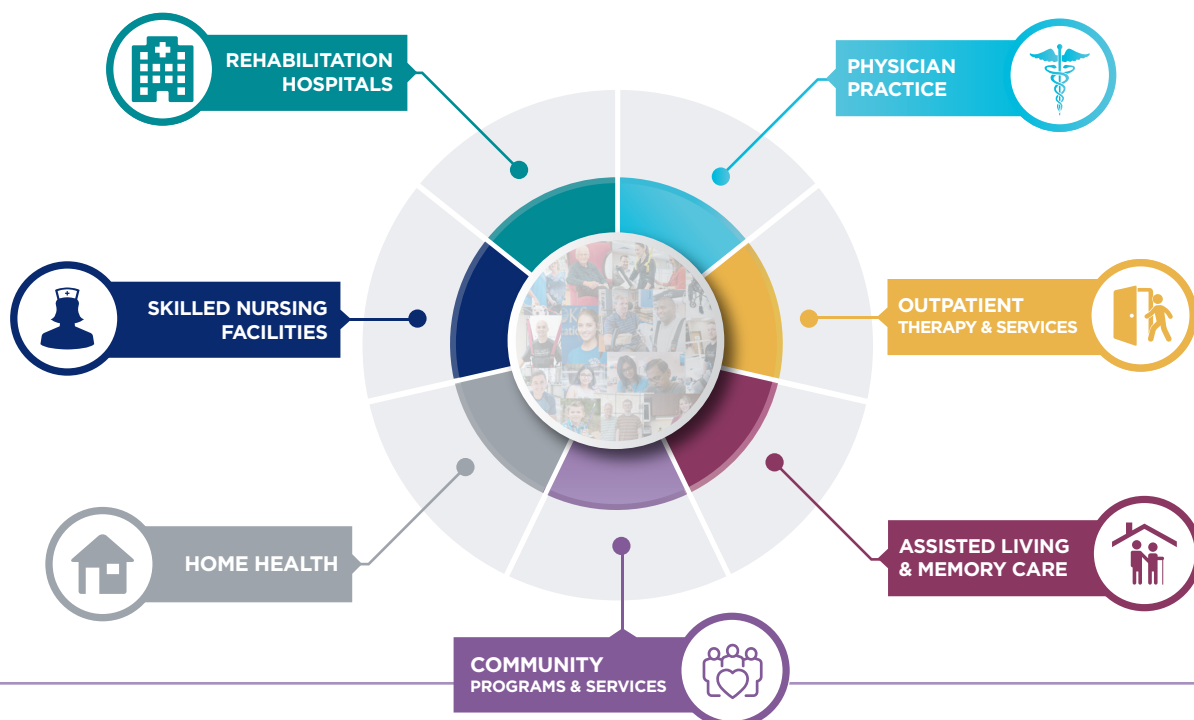
To serve even more patients, we renovated and added 10 new beds at our original 160-bed rehabilitation hospital in 2023 and will add an additional 36 beds to our Bartram hospital in Jacksonville, Florida. Construction is slated to begin later this year and be completed in 2025. We are also adding 12 beds to our 40-bed unit in Daytona Beach, Florida, in partnership with Halifax Health.

We will continue to grow and enhance our programs and services to ensure our patients and families receive the absolute best care so they can enjoy the highest quality of life possible.

Doug H. Baer

BROOKS REHABILITATION

SYSTEM OF CARE



ADAPTIVE SPORTS & RECREATION • APHASIA CENTER • BRAIN INJURY CLUBHOUSE • BRAIN INJURY DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM
 CONTRACT THERAPY SERVICES • HELEN'S HOUSE • INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING • NEURO RECOVERY CENTERS
 PEDIATRIC DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM • PEDIATRIC RECREATION • RESEARCH • SCHOOL RE-ENTRY PROGRAM • SPINAL CORD INJURY
 DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM • SUPPORT GROUPS • TRANSITIONAL CARE PROGRAM • WELLNESS • WORKERS' COMPENSATION

"Patients are at the center of all we do at Brooks Rehabilitation. Through our coordinated system of care, not only can we provide seamless transitions for our patients between levels of care, we can also effectively treat patients in the right setting for their individual needs resulting in the best possible outcomes."

- Doug Baer, President & CEO

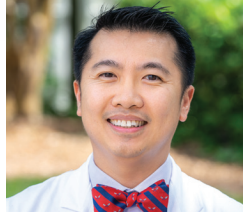
BROOKS REHABILITATION PHYSICIANS



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Jorge Perez Lopez, MD
Medical Director, Halifax Health | Brooks Rehabilitation Center for Inpatient Rehabilitation



Rebecca Andrew, MD
Internal Medicine



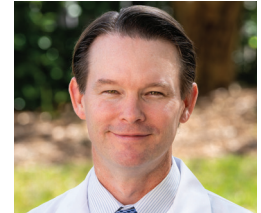
Mabel Caban, MD
Staff Physiatrist



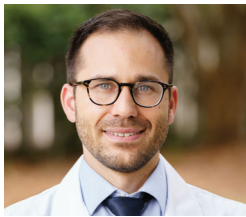
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Internal Medicine



Charles Dempsey, MD
Staff Physiatrist



Jantzen Fowler, MD
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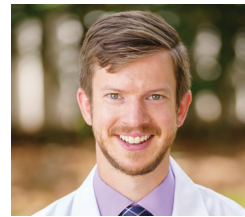
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**Rehabilitation Hospitals · Skilled Nursing Facilities
Home Health · Physician Practice · Outpatient Therapy
& Services · Assisted Living & Memory Care**

Q & A

TREVOR PERSAUD, DO



Trevor Persaud, DO, joined Brooks Rehabilitation in September 2023 and serves as the Associate Medical Director of the Brain Injury program. Dr. Persaud is also focused on the expansion of outpatient physical medicine and rehabilitation services for individuals with brain injuries and, as such, serves as Medical Director of the Brain Injury Day Treatment program.

Dr. Persaud received his medical degree from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine–Georgia Campus, Suwanee, Georgia. He then completed his Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) residency at Larkin Community Hospital in South Miami, where he served as chief resident and was awarded “Resident of the Year.” After his residency, Persaud completed a fellowship in Brain Injury Rehabilitation Medicine at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

When did you realize you wanted to become a physician?

During summer breaks as a teen, I would visit my great uncle and shadow his family medicine practice. I admired the strong bond he created with his patients and their families. One could tell that his patients trusted him and took his advice very seriously, which was admirable. During my undergraduate studies at the University of Central Florida, I joined the pre-med AMSA (American Medical Student Association) club, and my passion for medicine grew. My older brother was part of the club as well and he pushed me to get involved and become an active member.

What drew you to physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R), and in particular, brain injuries?

Prior to my first year of medical school, I had very little knowledge of the PM&R field. Then during my studies, I had a close family member experience a traumatic brain injury and they were admitted to an inpatient rehabilitation facility and were cared for by a brain injury PM&R physician, known as a physiatrist. At first, I could not tell what specialty the physician practiced. Depending on the day, I thought he was a neurologist, an orthopedic surgeon, a physical therapist

or a neuropsychologist. I finally built up the courage to ask, as he was very knowledgeable in all those areas, and he informed me he was a physiatrist who specializes in brain injury rehabilitation. I realized how wholesome this field of medicine was and realized there was a great need for doctors to specialize in it.

You treat patients in our rehabilitation hospital, outpatient clinic and specialized day treatment program. What does it mean to a patient to have a continuum of care available?

Continuity of care means that patients’ progress and journeys do not end after the first setting. Working with a patient from inpatient, to outpatient appointments and in the day treatment program, helps develop a solid relationship between the patient and their rehab team, all while building trust along the way. The entire rehab team and the patient share a common goal during their journey together: to maximize the patient’s functionality and recovery. It is also very rewarding, not only for the rehab team, but for the patients and their loved ones, to see their progress throughout their recovery. Having this care available means that patients do not have to worry about who they can expect support and encouragement from, and when. The Brooks team is here to be a source of strength and advocate for our patients.

This issue of Beyond features our Workers’ Compensation program. What opportunities and challenges does an injured worker face in their recovery?

From the thousands of injured workers who Brooks has cared for over the years, the biggest worry an injured worker has during their recovery is the question of whether they are able to return back to work to provide for their family. At Brooks, we’re fortunate to have a comprehensive Workers’ Compensation program that is capable of providing exceptional care for any injured worker with any condition, at any severity of injury, that needs rehabilitation.

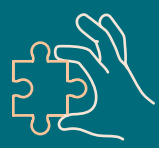


Workers' Compensation

at Brooks Rehabilitation

An Expert Team to Help Injured Workers Recover

World-class innovation, exceptional service and proven outcomes are what people expect from Brooks Rehabilitation, and the specialized area of workers' compensation is no exception. Assisting injured workers (workers' compensation-speak for patients) in their recoveries is at the heart of what a great workers' compensation program is all about.



Brooks, as always, strives to go beyond when it comes to assisting injured workers and their families in the recovery process.

Joshua Schuette, DPT, MBA, WRP, is Brooks' executive director of National Workers' Compensation Sales & Account Management. "The overall goal is to get that injured worker back to the same level of functioning they were at prior to injury. For less severe injuries, say a wrist strain with no additional complicating factors, we'll get them fully functional at the job they were at before. For more severe cases, getting them back to work may not mean the same job, but it may be modified duty, restricted hours, or a newly modified job altogether. Now, if somebody suffers a very traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury and they can't go back to work, then it's setting them up at the highest level of function possible."

A Dedicated Workers' Compensation Team



Brooks is one of few rehabilitation systems that have dedicated workers' compensation case management team for assisting injured worker and their families while they are in Brooks' care.

The unique complexities associated with this specific insurance-type require a specialized team who understand the specific legalities and policies.

"Workers' comp starts with the patient, but you also have a referring physician, the employer, an insurance company, maybe a third-party administrator and then possibly attorneys. We hold weekly team conferences with all parties so they get updates and can ask any specific questions," said Nick Fonner, MSW, Brooks workers' compensation case manager. "We also provide extensive documentation to ensure they have everything they need to help the patient continue moving forward in his or her recovery."

There are also additional resources available to an injured worker. "At the end of the day, what I enjoy most about this role is the ability to get our patients what they need to be

successful. We help injured workers become more functionally independent with a better quality of life," said Fonner.

"We combine world-class treatment with our knowledge of workers' compensation – understanding those little differences and peculiarities specific to it. And often that's that little bit – that 10 percent – that can make 100 percent of the difference in a patient's recovery," said Schuette.

A System of Care



Injured workers who come to Brooks for care have access to all of the expertise and technology Brooks provides. In addition to care at the No. 1 rehabilitation hospital in Florida ranked by US News & World Report, Brooks has a variety of additional services to support the needs of our patients throughout the stages of their recovery. Our workers' compensation program covers a variety of service areas including inpatient, outpatient, physicians practice, behavioral medicine, brain and spinal cord injury day treatment programs, amputee program and specialized services depending on the individual needs of each patient.

Our clinicians are among the highest trained and educated in their field and actively participate in clinical research and education on both the local and national levels. Many of our nurses are rehabilitation certified and many of our therapists have doctorate level degrees along with residency or fellowship training. Our physicians are board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R), with several receiving additional fellowship training and certification. All of our PM&R physicians that treat workers' compensation patients understand the unique nature of workers' compensation as well, so the injured worker is cared for by the physician most experienced with their injury. This is a true interdisciplinary team model.

Innovative Technology for Better Outcomes



Brooks Rehabilitation is committed to offering the latest equipment, technologies and research-based treatments. Many times, our expertise in evidence-based rehabilitation helps develop these emerging technologies

and gets them into wide-spread use sooner. We're dedicated to always being on the forefront of "what's next." Some of the latest resources our clinicians are using include:

ROBOTICS

The Cyberdyne Hybrid Assisted Limb (HAL) is a lower extremity exoskeleton designed to help patients improve lower-limb movement. HAL detects small electrical signals on the surface of the skin when a movement occurs. HAL then interprets these signals to assist in the desired movement. A specialty-trained physical therapist observes the patients walking and modifies settings in HAL to produce the desired results. Brooks is the only medical facility in the U.S. to offer therapy with HAL.

VIRTUAL REALITY (VR)

VR is an area Brooks is growing rapidly. We use an immersive environment to assess a patient's function and then provide appropriate activities to enhance their recovery. VR uses include balance, visual and mobility issues. Brooks is currently developing our own VR applications, which our therapists will control to provide functional tasks for each patient.

Brooks is one of only a handful of facilities in the country to offer patients the opportunity to use the C-Mill, an innovative treadmill for evaluating and treating impaired gait and balance by using augmented reality (AR), acoustic cues, virtual reality (VR) and force plate technology.

The C-Mill comes with reliable obstacle-avoidance games, realistic virtual-reality environments, dual-tasking applications and numerous balance challenges.

With more intensity, repetitive exercises and length of treatment, the training is more satisfying and rewarding for patients. It stimulates fast recovery of stability and gait.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

As the name implies, this covers a broad spectrum of new ways to give patients more functional independence in their lives. We train patients and caregivers to use new innovations to help with everyday activities – even simple tasks like eating a meal or getting in the front door. Assistive technology can move a patient from very dependent to more self-sufficient, creating a better quality of life. Assistive technology may also help a worker return to their job faster with modifications to the environment.



A "Comp Laude" Award-Winning Team



WorkCompCentral is a specialized news and information service for professionals in the workers' compensation industry.

WorkCompCentral hosts the Comp Laude awards, an annual, national awards program that celebrates the best and brightest in the workers' compensation industry. In order to win this award, an individual has to be nominated by someone in the industry. Nominees then often have to go through an interview process in order to become a finalist and finalists are then voted on by a panel in order to determine the winner of a respective category.

Brooks currently has three Comp Laude award winners on staff - a claim that very few, if any, rehabilitation hospital systems in the country can make.

2019: Nick Fonner, MSW - "Medical Professional of the Year"

2022: Joshua Shutts, COTA/L - "Injured Worker"

2023: Josh Schuette, DPT, MBA, WRP - "Medical Professional of the Year" and "Be the Change Award"

2023: Declan Graham (a former Brooks patient) - "Injured Worker"

JOSH SCHUETTE, DPT, MBA, WRP

For more than 18 years Josh Schuette, DPT, MBA, WRP, has worked as a physical therapist specializing in the field of workers' compensation. He began his career at Brooks in the pain rehabilitation program, where he specialized for more than 12 years in pain rehabilitation/opioid weaning programs. Many of the chronic pain patients he treated were actually workers' compensation patients or injured workers so the transition was a smooth one. Currently, Schuette is the Executive Director of National Workers Compensation Sales and Account Management for Brooks Rehabilitation. He not only performs his sales and physical therapist roles, but he also assists with injured worker case management and with developing new workers' compensation programs, such as value-based care programs.

In addition to his work-related duties, Schuette loves to give back by mentoring and speaking with prospective physical therapy students as well as assisting patients and individuals with special needs participate in running races, triathlons and obstacle races. He has done everything from pushing patients in racing wheelchairs to pulling them in rafts or by bicycle. Schuette also helped develop the "Voice of the Provider" education series for WorkCompCollege.com, and he is the 2023 Comp Laude "Be the Change" award winner.

"Be the Change" is a newer award for the person who most embodies the Spirit of Comp Laude, advocating for injured workers, spreading positivity in the industry and actively working to change the narrative of worker's compensation. It is one of four awards that denote the highest distinction in the worker's comp community and is given to individuals who have contributed throughout their career to making a positive impact in the workers' compensation industry.

"Winning the 'Be the Change' award was definitely one of the highlights of my professional career and life," says Schuette. "Winning was made even more special because two former injured workers I assisted in their recovery, Declan Graham and Josh Shutts, were there when I accepted the award and both had shared why they thought I was deserving of the award. It reaffirmed why we do what we do here at Brooks."

NICK FONNER, MSW

For the past 20 years, Nick Fonner, MSW, has been working in the workers' compensation arena. It all happened by chance...or maybe fate. A former colleague Fonner knew approached him during his last year of graduate school. He was looking to expand his company and bring on a worker's comp case manager. A week after graduation, Fonner accepted the position, found that he enjoyed it and has been in the field ever since.

There he worked as a field case manager for a small independent case management consulting firm in Illinois, hired by insurance companies. He then moved into the hospital setting in 2012. In 2021, Fonner and his family moved to Florida to be closer to extended family where he started in his role as workers' compensation case manager at Brooks.

Since joining Brooks, Fonner has become a vital member of the workers' compensation team and has played a major role in assisting numerous patients in their comeback stories.



Comp Laude Award winners & Brooks fulltime employees

L - R: Josh Schuette, Nick Fonner and Joshua Shutts

His role as a case manager extends from the inpatient setting to helping patients and their families' transition into other Brooks' programs such as the Spinal Cord Injury Day Treatment Program.

Not only does Fonner possess the unique education and training for his role as a case manager, but has his own experience navigating the rehabilitation process as spinal cord injury survivor. In 1995, he suffered a C5/C6 complete spinal cord injury in a motor vehicle accident. Fonner underwent multiple surgeries and extensive rehabilitation in order to improve his physical functioning to the point where he join the workforce and resume living independently again. He did not just survive his injury, he thrived. His SCI injury and personal experiences provides Fonner to have a further insight into the daily struggles our patients encounter when confronted with their new injuries and allows him the ability to quickly connect with patients on their road to recovery.

In his 28 years of SCI life, Fonner has participated in many recreational and competitive activities including wheelchair softball, road racing, rock climbing and handcycling. Fonner found his greatest love in the sport of Wheelchair rugby, playing nationally for 20+ years as well as a member of the USA Wheelchair Rugby Team from 2005 to 2008 where he competed both nationally and internationally. He also participated in the creation of a website - FacingDisability.com - that was specifically designed to connect families who are suddenly confronted with a spinal cord injury to individuals that have already been there and can share their experiences.

"I am so impressed by Nick and everything he does on a given day," says his friend and coworker, Schuette. "Nick does so much to help our injured workers and their families and he assists them across multiple care settings. Nothing slows this guy down. Bottom line: Nick is a superhero!"



Injured Worker Recovery

What Workers' Compensation is All About



JOSHUA SHUTTS, COTA/L

Joshua Shutts was training to be an assistant shop foreman and was required to work in each department as he trained. The steel cutting band saw was the last area he needed to learn. He went to line up a cut manually, hit the wrong button and his dominant right hand was pulled into the saw. Based on the extent of his injuries and the significant loss of blood, Josh was life-flighted to HCA Florida Blake Hospital. After an initial 16-hour surgery and several more surgeries during his nine-day ICU stay, his right middle finger was amputated, the right ring finger has a non-movable artificial joint, and the pinky finger was fused.

When he was cleared, Josh's workers' comp case manager asked where he wanted to do therapy and he immediately said Brooks. His father was previously in Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital after a stroke and had an excellent experience. Josh completed outpatient occupational therapy (OT) at Brooks Rehabilitation St. Augustine with a certified hand therapist (CHT).

The outpatient therapy he received at Brooks Rehabilitation revived a desire in him to help others. With encouragement from this family and his treating therapists at Brooks, Josh made the decision to change his career and become a certified occupational therapist assistant (COTA).

In order to become a COTA, Josh had to first meet the physical demands for the job. "Missing a finger and having two other fingers that are not fully functional significantly affects Josh's ability to hold objects with his dominant right hand," said Schuette. "Josh had to work extremely hard in OT in order to compensate and build the strength necessary to lift and carry heavier objects with his injured right hand."

A little over two years after his catastrophic work injury, Josh participated in a Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) to help determine his future work abilities. Because of the hard work he put in, Josh was able to safely lift and carry 60 pounds and he was, therefore, able to pursue his dream of becoming a COTA.

Josh immediately registered for college to take his prerequisites and got accepted into an occupational therapy program in 2020. He was allowed to write in three options for the place he's like to do his field work and answered Brooks in all three.

He spent two weeks working with Brooks Adaptive Sports and Recreation program, followed by eight weeks at the Brooks Healthcare Plaza location. Being able to empathize with patients who were struggling with similar experiences inspired a greater passion to help others. Josh created a TikTok channel with tips and tricks for others with similar



“Advocate for yourself. Make sure everyone is playing his or her role in the system. Trust the process.”

Joshua Shutts, COTA/L

injuries. He also created several devices to help both his patients and others with limited hand mobility.

After graduating with honors, Josh passed his board exam in 2022 to become a certified occupational therapy assistant (COTA). He was hired as a COTA at the Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital - University Campus where his dad was once a patient. He now encourages his own patients and other worker's comp patient with similar injuries.

Since starting his work for Brooks, he was awarded as Brooks Rehabilitation's 2022 Rehab Champion. Each year, Brooks accepts nominations from employees for a former Brooks patient, participant, resident or elder who had met the challenges of physical rehabilitation and whose courage and tenacity has been a source of inspiration to others. Only a month later, Josh took home a Comp Laude Award in the Injured Worker category.

Based on his own journey navigating through the workers' compensation system, Shutts offers this advice for others, "Advocate for yourself. Make sure everyone is playing his or her role in the system. Trust the process. Don't forget the injured worker after he or she hits the one-year mark after the date-of-injury. Don't get tired of the injured worker. Treat them the same and help them complete their journey."

DECLAN GRAHAM

Declan Graham remembers leaving work at Disney's Animal Kingdom in Kissimmee, Florida, on his motorcycle and waking up in the ICU. "From the police and witness reports, they determined someone cut me off going around a corner. I hit a guardrail at 40 miles an hour. My chest hit the guardrail first, and my body got bent in half over it. My spine broke. My ribs broke and went into my lungs, collapsing them," said Declan.

He sustained a T-5 spinal cord injury and required immediate surgery. "They had to fuse four of my vertebrae together, and put two rods, eight screws in my back, and some chest tubes as well." He spent three weeks in ICU and another week in the hospital.

Through Disney and the worker's compensation team, Declan was then transferred to Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital - University Campus. When Declan first arrived at Brooks, he could only wiggle the toes on his left foot. "One of the initial assessments performed on Declan was one to see what electric signals were reaching his lower extremities. This initial assessment revealed no signals were reaching his right lower extremity, which painted a very bleak prognosis in regards to him ever being able to functionally use his right leg or ever being able to walk independently again," said Schuette.

In spite of this initial assessment, Declan was unfazed and displayed the positive attitude that would come to be synonymous with how he took on all challenges throughout his rehabilitation journey. His therapy was tailored to his specific needs and abilities - working on both his mobility and how to be as independent as possible in a wheelchair.

When Declan was well enough, he was able to easily transition to his next level of care offered at Brooks. He started the Spinal Cord Injury and Related Disorders Day Treatment program. His overall goals in the SCI day program were "to strengthen my upper body, strengthen my right arm, and most importantly, to strengthen my legs and get my form down to perfection in order to be able to walk," said Declan. He used the Hybrid Assistive Limb (HAL) and other specialized technology along with clinicians experienced in helping patients like Declan.

After 12 weeks of intensive rehabilitation where he gave his signature 110 percent effort, he was discharged from the program walking independently with the use of a rolling walker and an ankle foot orthosis (AFO). He was also able to independently climb stairs.

When Declan returned home, he was able to continue physical therapy with HAL in Brooks' Osceola Crossings outpatient clinic. "Declan has made great progress both in

and out of HAL," said Center Manager Carolyn Tremblay, PT, DPT. "He progressed with balance work in and out of his braces, his endurance and tolerance to activity is increased and he's increased in independence in all daily activities."

Declan also participated in Brooks Rehabilitation's Challenge Mile, which is an organized mile walk made up of former patients and their families and caregivers. Not only was Declan able to walk the full mile, but he also encouraged others to cross the finish line including doing multiple side lunges while shouting words of motivation to one current patient as he worked to cross the finish line.

Most importantly for Declan, he returned to working full-time at Disney's Animal Kingdom. With his positive attitude and friendly demeanor, Declan serves as an inspiration to individuals going through the rehabilitation process. When children with disabilities see Declan working at Animal Kingdom with his AFO, they ask him questions. He is able to speak about what he had to overcome and how they, too, can go onto working full-time in spite of having a physical challenge.



Declan (right) assists others cross the finish line at the Brooks Rehabilitation Challenge Mile.



Geneva Tonuzi, MD, works with patients in the Value-Based Care (VBC) partnership.

Pioneers in Value-Based Care



Helping injured workers in their recovery process will always be at the heart of Brooks' Workers' Compensation Program. In order to continue to evolve and improve our services to better meet our injured workers' needs, Brooks is constantly looking into new programs and services. This led to a groundbreaking Value-Based Care (VBC) partnership.

In 2021, Brooks Rehabilitation was selected to partner with Paradigm, an accountable care management organization and pioneer in value-based care, to create an innovative outpatient program that delivered specialized medical expertise and technology to help injured workers achieve their best outcomes. In 2022, the two organizations added an inpatient program designed to deliver a collaborative approach to best-in-class clinical care for the most challenging spinal cord injuries.

"It was an honor to be chosen to participate in Paradigm's value-based partnership initiative as a rehabilitation provider with expertise in spinal cord injury medicine," says Geneva Tonuzi, MD, medical director, spinal cord injury and Cyberdyne, at Brooks Rehabilitation. "Paradigm is recognized as an industry leader in providing the best solutions to help injured workers recover. As an industry leader in rehabilitation, Brooks strives to be at the forefront of innovation. We developed a customized program for the most highly complex injuries using evidence-based treatments combined with the latest technology. This model is truly utilizing best practices and an interdisciplinary approach to ensure our Paradigm patients achieve the best possible outcomes in their recovery."

Patients participating in the program receive individualized care plans that may include:

- **Brooks' Hybrid Program**, where they will have access to the technology offered in the Neuro Recovery Center (NRC) in addition to their one-on-one therapy time.
- A **wound program** with wound stimulation to improve healing.
- **Spinal cord injury education classes**, including our lunch dining group for patients, as appropriate based on upper extremity function, to learn and implement new strategies to increase independence with self-feeding.
- Access to the **Cyberdyne Hybrid Assistive Limb (HAL)** device, Access to the Cyberdyne Hybrid Assistive Limb (HAL), along with other innovative technology in the NRC.

"Brooks Rehabilitation has a strong history of developing new tools to serve patient needs and empower them to achieve their highest level of recovery," says Michael Choo, MD, chief medical officer and senior vice president of Paradigm. "This partnership provides our injured workers access to innovative industry-leading and scientifically proven technologies, as well as leverages our collective clinicians and robust data to maximize functional outcomes."

Temporary housing for patients, families and caregivers is available at Helen's House while in Jacksonville, Florida. Brooks also offers additional services, like occupational therapy and psychology as needed for each patient. Patients can also participate in Brooks' comprehensive Adaptive Sports and Recreation Program that provide fun and fitness for individuals with physical disabilities.



Transitional Care Program

Innovation is a core value that has always been a driving force at Brooks Rehabilitation. For more than 50 years, Brooks always puts patients at the center of all we do. We continually add new technologies, services and programs to best meet our patients' needs and go beyond expectations. It is the spirit of innovation that led to the creation of our newest service: a Transitional Care Program (TCP). Launching summer 2024, Brooks is opening a 12-bed transitional care program unit adjacent to our Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital – University Campus.

Over the years, the Brooks workers' compensation team treated patients in our inpatient rehabilitation hospitals that have made functional improvements, but have not improved enough to be discharged home. The TCP is designed for those patients who may no longer require an inpatient level of care, but still require intensive rehabilitation services and are unsafe to return home. This unit will have the ability to accommodate longer lengths of stays depending on the individual needs of each workers' compensation patient.

The 12-bed unit is made up entirely of individual patient rooms and will offer improved nurse-to-patient staffing ratios than other traditional discharge facility options. The unit will also have a dedicated program director, as well as a dedicated case manager, in order to better care for patient needs.

Individual physical, occupational and speech therapy services will be offered at the TCP, along with individual psychology services and programs that improve the overall patient experience, such as recreational therapy. For those workers' compensation patients who have improved enough functionally to consider a return to work, a work conditioning program with targeted functional movements and progressions is offered as well.

One of the main factors that will differentiate Brooks' TCP from similar programs is the continuity of physician care.



Our specialized brain injury and spinal cord injury physicians who care for the patients in our inpatient hospitals will be to continue to care for these same patients in our TCP.

"At Brooks, we always put our patients first in any endeavor we take on, and our upcoming Transitional Care Program is no different," says Kenneth Ngo, MD, FAAMP&R, medical director, Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital – University Campus, Brooks Brain Injury Program and Center for Innovation. "What I love about this program is that I will be able to care for my patients seamlessly, as they transition from one level of care to another. I'm able to give better one-on-one care to my patients and develop a better relationship with them, which is what great medicine is all about."

In addition to having our physicians follow our patients as they transition from our inpatient hospitals to our TCP, members of Brooks' dedicated workers' compensation team will also be following our workers' compensation patients as well. "It is important to have the resources of our dedicated (workers' compensation) team follow our patients as they transition from one part of our Brooks' system of care to the next as it leads to improvements in patient care and helps improve workflows," said Nick Fonner, MSW, workers' compensation case manager.

A Novel Program Gives Brooks Rehabilitation CNAs Opportunity for Career Advancement

Nurses are crucial to our system, providing care for everyone from our injured workers to our youngest pediatric patients. The nursing shortage has been well documented and Brooks was not immune. Brooks found itself paying a premium to hire nurses from a staffing agency, most of whom had never worked in the rehabilitation specialty. This led Joanne S. Hoertz, RN, MSN, CRRN, senior vice president for nursing and system chief nursing officer at Brooks Rehabilitation, to see if Brooks could take those resources and allocate them toward the development of Brooks' dedicated employees.

Pamela Lambert, MSN, MBA, RN, CRRN, CHSE, is the nursing education and professional development leader at Brooks' Institute of Higher Learning (IHL). "We knew we had plenty of CNAs who are high performing in the skilled setting. We asked them if they had ever thought of becoming nurses, and the resounding answer was, 'Yes.'"

For many of the CNAs, nursing school had been out of the question – they didn't have financial stability nor resources, and many nursing schools want full-time students and don't offer flexibility around healthcare work schedules. The opportunity to advance in the nursing field just didn't exist for them.

Hoertz and Lambert connected with Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ), which offers a Practical Nursing

(PN) Career Certificate Program with eligibility to take the standardized exam for licensed practical nurse (LPN).

Together, Brooks and FSCJ created a pilot program in which:

- FSCJ instructors teach at Brooks for an eight-hour class day on Tuesdays, a four-hour class day on Thursdays and clinical rotation on Saturdays.
- Tuition, laptops, scrubs and supplies were all provided by Brooks Rehabilitation.
- Additional tutoring and test prep is offered through the IHL.

The first cohort group will graduate in summer 2024 and will then take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) to become LPNs. To date all have passed their coursework and standardized tests. Hoertz and Lambert have already selected candidates for the next cohort. They received more than 40 applications for the 12 spots.

"We are pleased to partner with Brooks Rehabilitation in this innovative solution that not only helps solve the nursing shortage, but also elevates the level of care offered to our community by equipping compassionate professionals with a track record of success in caregiving," said FSCJ President John Avendano, Ph.D. "FSCJ is grateful for this opportunity to walk alongside these future nurses in their educational journey."



Brooks Rehabilitation and FSCJ's first cohort of CNAs in the pilot LPN program

Dedicated Day Programs for Injured Workers with Brain or Spinal Cord Injuries



For injured workers who have experienced a brain injury or spinal cord injury, additional intensive rehabilitation may be needed to help transition from a hospital level of care and back into the community. Brooks Rehabilitation offers both the Brain Injury Day Treatment (BIDT) program and the Spinal Cord Injury & Related Disorders Day Treatment Program (SCI/D).

MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF SPECIALIZED CARE

The Brain Injury Day Treatment (BIDT) Program, formed in 1993, uses a comprehensive and interdisciplinary treatment model to help individuals who have sustained either a traumatic (e.g., a fall, car accident, etc., whether moderate-to-severe) or non-traumatic (e.g., CVA) brain injury.

The BIDT program was created to help improve cognition/ thinking skills, communication ability, social skills and emotional ability all while one continues to regain physical abilities. Additional components of the program include (when appropriate) community outings, grocery shopping, cooking, school re-entry and return to work training.

To determine the intensity and length of treatment that will be most beneficial, care begins with a comprehensive neurobehavioral status exam or a neuropsychological evaluation. Customized therapy is then available up to five times per week. Physical, occupational, speech and cognitive

rehabilitation therapy, as well as psychology, are provided in a combination of small group and one-on-one sessions.

After the patient participates in the program for over a week, a treatment plan is created to match the needs of the patient. Over the course of six to 12 weeks, patients spend most of the day working with highly trained therapists in consultation with our physicians to improve memory, attention, multitasking and functional life skills. This model provides individuals with up to as many as 30 hours of therapy per week. The treatment team meets weekly to discuss goals and progress.

While the majority of the patients participate in the program on a full-time basis, some patients may participate at a reduced schedule as well. For instance, participation in the program may be reduced while re-introducing the patient to a work schedule..

FULFILLING AN UNMET NEED

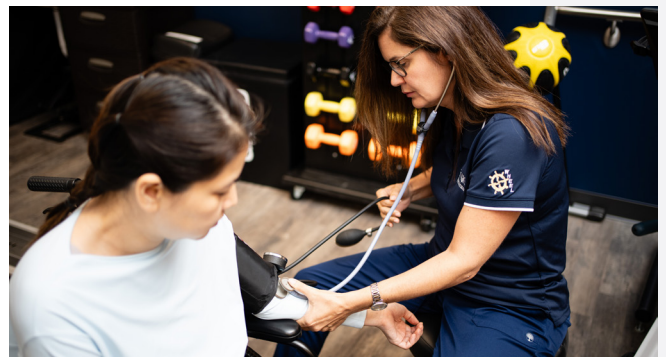
In 2019, Brooks created the Spinal Cord Injury & Related Disorders Day Treatment Program (SCI/D) after identifying a gap in service delivery between current inpatient and outpatient SCI care programs. The SCI/D program focuses on managing ongoing medical needs with special attention towards home and community reintegration.

The program is overseen by a medical director and the interdisciplinary team includes a physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, psychologist and a nurse case manager. All clinicians are Brooks team members and have specialized training in spinal cord injuries.

Patients in the program will participate in full-day treatment for a maximum of five hours a day, five days a week for an average of six to 12 weeks. Once enrolled, patients are evaluated and given a personalized treatment plan which can include one-on-one therapy sessions, group-based interventions and classes, education and specialized services to best address each patients' individual goals and needs.

Discharge planning starts on day one. Caregiver training and education is highly recommended and encouraged, and various training activities will be completed in the clinic as well as out in the community to ensure patients are best prepared to return home.

The team can assist with determining the appropriate durable medical equipment, orthotics or braces, and home/ car modifications to help patients achieve their highest level of safety and independence. Vocational rehab can also be coordinated for injured workers who may need modifications at their current job or need to pursue a different line of work.



PATIENT STORY

Malik Daricaud

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY:

RETURNING A POLICE OFFICER TO WORK



20 BEYOND | SPRING/SUMMER 2024

Officer Malik Daricaud dreamed of being in law enforcement from an early age. His time in the Navy brought him to Jacksonville where he joined the Florida Air National Guard and the police academy at Florida State College at Jacksonville. The two-year patrol officer with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) tried not to dwell on the dangers of the job... until his own life was on the line.

On March 26, 2023, Daricaud was following up at a home after a traffic stop investigation. He shined his flashlight into the house as the door opened and made eye contact with the person of interest. He then saw a bright burst of light and hit the floor.

According to JSO, three gunshots were fired from an SKS rifle. One of the bullets hit the flashlight Daricaud was holding in his hand, sending fragments into his neck and shoulders, causing severe damage.

Police Sgt. Senad Ahmetovic, Police Officer Justin A. Cotton and Police Officer Kerry F. Redmond rushed to pull Daricaud to safety. They were awarded Medals of Valor for their heroic actions that saved his life.

Jasmine Faison, Daricaud's wife, remembers hearing the sirens that morning, not realizing her husband was the one in need. Jasmine and his 5-year-old son, Malachi, were his only thought as he lay there unable to move.

Daricaud was rushed to UF Health Jacksonville. "I remember every bump on that ride because of the pain I was in, until I blacked out," said Daricaud. It took a day or two before he was lucid and conscious. He spent a week there undergoing a series of evaluations. Once he was stable enough, he was transferred to Brooks Rehabilitation for intensive therapies.

"I didn't know how bad my injury was, and I didn't know what recovery would look like. I didn't know if I would ever be able to walk again. In my head, I was already thinking what life might be like and what I might and might not be able to do ever again," said Daricaud.

Howard Weiss, DO, and a therapy team of Sydney Dalton, PT, DPT, Alexa Shaw, MSOT, OTR/L, and Kameron Stricklin, OTD, OTR/L, were with Daricaud from day one at Brooks.

"I remember coming to do his first physical therapy evaluation and he wasn't able to move much at all," said Dalton. "The bullet went in around the C3-C4 area of his spinal cord, near the base of his neck, so it affects anything below that region. He had more complications on the right side because that's where the bullet went in, along with damage to the brachial plexus, a network of nerves in the shoulder responsible for movement and signals from the spinal cord to the arms and hands."



"I didn't know how bad my injury was, and I didn't know what recovery would look like. I didn't know if I would ever be able to walk again."

- DARICAUD

PATIENT STORY

“Malik was severely impaired and in excruciating pain when he first arrived. He was having trouble breathing and dealing with other medical complexities early on, which delayed his therapies. But from the beginning, I promised him he would walk out of our doors,” said Dr. Weiss.

Getting Daricaud walking again would be no easy task. “There is a clinical prediction rule utilizing the literature that calculates the likelihood of someone walking again,” said Dalton. “I calculated it when Malik first arrived and it was a low percentage. We do see a lot of recovery in patients with incomplete spinal cord injuries, but seeing how impaired he was, I wasn’t sure.”

“Malik was also requiring 100 percent assistance from one to two people with self-care including basic things like brushing his teeth and getting dressed when he came to Brooks due to his medical complexity, pain, etc.,” said one of Daricaud’s occupational therapists, Kameron Stricklin, OTD, OTR/L.

“I remember how hopeful Malik was despite his current level of function and it made it so easy to root for him,” said Alexa Shaw, MSOT, OTR/L, Daricaud’s other occupational therapist. “I knew we were going to push as hard as we could to get him as independent as possible with all of his activities of daily living (ADLs).”

Even after a month, the progress ebbed and flowed. Daricaud was still only able to tolerate low-level interventions like getting out of bed and into an upright position on a tilt table. His blood pressure would drop or the pain was unbearable, even with his strong will and determination.

“I was having to adapt to always being in pain. Trying to push through it. Dr. Weiss tried different medications and different dosages so I could do something in therapy. Once we got it under control and I was able to just focus on therapy and not the pain, that was the turning point in my recovery,” said Daricaud.

“I remember the first time he sat up on his own. We were practicing balance on the edge of his bed and he says, ‘Unhand me, Sydney!’ So I let go, and I not only got to see him hold himself upright unsupported, but I was starting to see his personality return as well.”

There was a point in Daricaud’s recovery where it took four clinicians to help him stand in parallel bars but that moment showed the team his legs were functioning and he had potential.

“Sitting in a wheelchair for so long, I forgot how tall I was. I remember looking down on my therapists and telling them ‘Wow, you guys are really short!’ It felt really good to get back on my feet again.”



Daricaud is back at work as an Intelligence Analyst with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Photo provided by JSO

From there, his team used a Moveo (a modified leg press), electrical stimulation and progressed to the Cyberdyne Hybrid Assistive Limb.

“My family and my friend Logan were always there keeping me motivated. And the support that I’ve received from the Agency [JSO], the City of Jacksonville and the community kept me progressing,” said Daricaud.

The American Spinal Injury Association (ASIA) Impairment Scale is used to assess individuals with spinal cord injuries. There are five levels ranging from a complete loss of function to completely normal. When Daricaud arrived, he was classified as an ASIA C, which means his injury was incomplete that less than half of the muscles below the level of injury are able to move against gravity. He is now classified as an ASIA D.

“I felt like I was frozen and things were thawing out. Every day I would get something else back. And every time we would set new goals to keep pushing forward.”

“Individuals with injuries like Malik’s can continue to keep making improvements up to two years after an injury,” said Dr. Weiss. “For him to be able to progress from a C to a D and continue to improve has been awesome,” said Dalton.

Daricaud is now walking more than 200 feet. He and Dalton continue to work on improving efficiency of walking via high intensity gait training while concurrently working on balance, endurance and overall strength and mobility.

“We’ve gotten to know each other very well,” said Dalton. “One of the most fulfilling parts of my job is being able



“I am so grateful for everything I have learned from Malik, like how to be strong through adversity, be loving when we are scared and believe in ourselves no matter what.” - SHAW

to connect with my patients on an emotional level while improving their physical function. My priority is Malik's treatment and care but creating a friendship and getting to know him as a person has been great as well.”

“Malik has worked so hard during his occupational therapy sessions to achieve his independence back. For his instrumental ADL tasks, those that help a person care for themselves independently, such as lower body dressing and cooking, Malik can now complete them while standing, which shows how well PT and OT can come together to get a patient back to the things they love to do,” said Shaw.

“He is now able to dress, bathe and drive himself using adaptive controls independently due to his hard work with occupational therapy. He would not be able to perform his job functions or return home without his participation in OT,” said Stricklin.

Knowing Daricaud's biggest goal was to return to work with JSO, Dr. Weiss brainstormed possibilities with a former law enforcement patient, FDLE Officer Mike Clark. Clark was also injured in the line of duty and told he would never walk again. “I'm where I'm at now because of Brooks,” he shared. Clark visited Daricaud early in his recovery to encourage him. “I told Malik to trust his body. Keep moving forward no matter what. Keep that never quit attitude even through the tough days.”

Working together with Sheriff TK Waters, they found the best place for Daricaud's skills and current level of ability – the Real-time Crime Center with JSO. “Thinking back to when I was in the same position, this is absolutely where I would want to be if it existed,” said Clark.

Daricaud is now working several days a week as an Intelligence Analyst. “I have a proactive role in assisting officers that are on the streets by getting them information that they wouldn't have had immediately.” He's already making a difference.

“We had a ‘shots fired’ event and officers were immediately in the area. The suspect took off running and we were able to view and locate the subject taking off a bag or satchel and dispatched units to locate the bag containing the firearm used. It felt good to know it was off the streets before, God-forbid, a child found it. I function like an ‘eye in the sky’ where I can tune in to different cameras and information and get it out to officers so they can better perform their roles.”

“It has been an honor and a privilege to get to help this veteran and police officer. He was born to be in law enforcement and he will be able to continue doing what he loves. He has a long recovery still ahead, but to get to see him doing more than anyone expected is why I love what I do,” said Dr. Weiss.

“Over the last year of working with Malik I know a friendship has formed that I will cherish for a long time to come,” said Shaw. “I am so grateful for everything I have learned from Malik, like how to be strong through adversity, be loving when we are scared and believe in ourselves no matter what.”

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