



A/Prof Patrick Weinrauch
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Rehabilitation just got hip with iPads

Patients having hip replacement surgery at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital are the first in Australia to benefit from new online healthcare technology which boosts rehabilitation after surgery.

Orthopaedic Surgeon Associate Professor Patrick Weinrauch in collaboration with the allied health and nursing staff at St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital and SHI Global have successfully implemented a web-based care program called healthInx™ that utilises iPad, smartphone

or computer devices to educate and guide patients through their pre-operative and post-operative rehabilitation. More than 130 patients have been treated using the technology.

Patients undergoing hip replacement surgery take part in a nine-week online program. The first three weeks includes pre-surgery information, preparatory exercises, a virtual theatre tour, advice from the anaesthetist and practical information about how to prepare for upcoming

surgery. The six-week post-surgery component begins in hospital – patients are able to login to their online program using iPads provided to them in the ward.

"Using the healthInx technology platform enables us to deliver a wide variety of educational material to assist patients through all stages of their preparation and recovery," A/Prof Weinrauch said.

"Physiotherapists in the ward can use the technology as an additional tool to assist educating patients on how to best perform their exercises. The flexible and progressive post-discharge exercise program ensures better continuity and standardisation of care. healthInx also provides an easily accessible resource library for patients, including information relating to wound care, post-operative precautions and even smoking and dietary advice," he said.

A/Prof Weinrauch said that embracing technology and tailoring care plans for patients through the healthInx platform has improved patient understanding and compliance, with less anxiety and a better quality of recovery.

"The healthInx program assists patients who are often nervous before surgery and relatively immobile for the first six weeks after their surgery. In the post-discharge phase it allows for us to provide care



LINDA COUSEN, PATIENT



FROM LEFT: ANAESTHETIST DR STEVEN COOK & PHYSIOTHERAPIST RACHEL VICKERY EXPLAIN THE NEW WEB BASED CARE PROGRAM TO LINDA COUSEN

extending beyond traditional physical location and time constraints," A/Prof Weinrauch said.

"In particular, patients in remote areas who experience difficulty accessing post-operative physiotherapy can significantly benefit from using this technology," he said.

Ms Rachel Vickery, physiotherapist and technical director of healthInx said that after hip replacement surgery patients may find it difficult to see their physiotherapist on a regular basis, so having a daily exercise routine online engages and encourages people to keep up their exercises. More importantly, the exercise videos mean patients actually remember what they are meant to do and so get better faster.

"We all work and live in a time-pressured world so any technology that can reinforce key messages and empower patients to stay on track with their health management is extremely beneficial," Ms Vickery said

A/Prof Weinrauch believes there are further uses for this type of application in Australia to manage chronic conditions like diabetes, obesity and respiratory conditions and also for health education and behavioural change programs.

"Patients are ready to embrace online health technology, often more so than clinicians. Using online technologies does not in any way replace our traditional methods of health care delivery, they are complementary and enable us to provide better quality care," he said.

Brisbane Hip Clinic
Suite 2, Level 7
St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital
457 Wickham Tce
Spring Hill QLD 4000
T 07 3831 9777



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