

## Eli's Rehab Report

### Trends: Focus On Outpatient Therapy In Patients' Homes To Reap Big Rewards

**Act now on this growing trend - before your competition does.**

If you aren't providing outpatient therapy in patients' homes, you're missing out on a lucrative, wide-open market that pays off in both patient improvement and a booming bottom line.

Many therapists and their patients are used to the routine of working in a clinical setting where the patient arrives at a certain time and the therapist stays put. However, getting to and from a therapy appointment often leaves patients frustrated and fatigued, points out **Lynn Steffes, PT** with Steffes & Associates in New Berlin, WI.

Better: Rather than struggle with patients who barely made it to their appointments -- or nag those who begin skipping appointments altogether -- therapists should reach out to patients in their home environments, Steffes encourages.

#### **Efficiency May Drop, But Satisfaction Will Rise**

The positive benefits of in-the-home therapy are enormous, experts say. Therapists are able to work one-on-one with patients in an environment that makes them feel safe and secure -- and patients are well-rested and relaxed when they begin therapy because the therapist came to them.

Working with patients in the environments they navigate every day keeps them independent longer and helps you spot any problems that may interfere with their therapy -- such as under-reported medication use or cluttered living spaces that discourage physical activity, says **Peter Kovacek, PT**, co-owner of In Home Rehab and PTManager.com.

In-home therapy can also cut your overhead costs. When your "office" is a patient's home, you don't need to pay for clinic space or all the materials and personnel that come along with it, Steffes points out. Therapists could contract with practices for at-home therapy or they can venture out independently.

Drawbacks: Of course, in-home therapy doesn't come without some down sides. Providing therapy in patients' homes simply "isn't as efficient as having them come to you" and prevents you from lining up back-to-back appointments, Steffes points out.

#### **Earmark At-Home Clients For Most Experienced Therapists**

Therapists must also be well trained and highly experienced before they work with patients in isolated environments where there aren't other care providers around for backup, Kovacek stresses.

Why: The people who will most benefit from in-home therapy "likely have a multitude of problems" that would make them well suited for a nursing home or other care facility, but they really want to keep their independence, Kovacek explains.

Therefore, patients need a therapist who can provide any level of care they might need.

#### **The Bottom Line**

Providing in-home outpatient therapy may slow you down, but your patients' behavior and attitude toward therapy should make up for slower sessions or fewer patients per day, Steffes notes.

Because patients are more willing and able to participate in their therapy plans and comply with your orders, you'll see a



greater return on your time investment -- and patients will be more pleased with their care.