



## International Rehabilitation Forum

### News Release

For Immediate Release

April 15, 2020

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### International Rehabilitation Forum Launches “Getting Home” Protocols for COVID-19 Patients

*Global organization aims for faster discharges, better outcomes starting at patient admission*

(Middlebury, Vermont/April 15, 2020) – A global organization of physical rehabilitation experts has developed protocols for hospitals to encourage COVID-19 patients to start thinking about recovery and discharge from the moment they are admitted.

The International Rehabilitation Forum’s **Getting Home after COVID-19** tools are aimed at helping hospitals help patients get stronger faster through assessment, planning, education, exercise and support.

“We know that COVID-19 patients are weak, and spending a long time in a bed makes them frail. If hospitals can appropriately keep them moving and teach them how to function using our protocols, patients can go home faster and in better condition. In addition, we can free up beds for other very sick people who need them,” said Dr. Andrew Haig, IRF president and professor emeritus, University of Michigan.

**Getting Home after COVID-19** is a free program that consists of these elements:

- **Assessment** – A simple questionnaire assesses patients when they are admitted and determines at the outset what barriers they may face in recovery and getting home safely.
- **Planning** – Patients start with going home in mind. They know what it will take for them to get healthy and can begin working on it as soon as possible.
- **Education** – A handout teaches patients in isolation or on busy wards how and why to do basic rehab exercises on their own.
- **Exercise** – IRF is designing simple exercise videos that bedridden patients can watch and participate in.
- **Support** – Through ongoing assessment, nurses can determine what a patient needs for discharge to home or a rehabilitation facility.

“Research indicates that including expert rehabilitation from the very beginning of a health crisis means better functional outcomes for patients, and that’s especially important with COVID-19,” Haig said. “Patients recovering from COVID-19 [report](#) significant neurological complications including stroke, impaired consciousness and skeletal muscle injuries, in addition to lung problems – not to mention underlying health concerns from before the patient was admitted.”

A decade ago, IRF launched the first-ever meeting on rehabilitation after disasters, including earthquakes and floods. In early 2020, IRF’s African and American rehabilitation doctors, who have met weekly for years, realized that the world was facing a health crisis with COVID-19. They brainstormed about what was needed, then built the tools that can be used in any type of healthcare setting. Colleagues around the world reviewed and suggested improvements based on their experiences, then through consensus a group of documents was finalized.

Haig said IRF is distributing the materials for free through its website, [www.RehabForum.org](http://www.RehabForum.org). The organization also is working with doctors and hospitals around the world to collect data and learn about the effectiveness of the protocols. Additionally, it is overseeing the development of a multi-disciplinary book focused on COVID-19 rehabilitation.

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#### **About Andrew J. Haig, M.D.**

Professor Emeritus at the University of Michigan, and president of the International Rehabilitation Forum, Andrew Haig has received the nation’s top awards in research, education, and teaching in the field of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He practices in Middlebury and Williston Vermont.

#### **About International Rehabilitation Forum**

IRF is a 501c3 organization that brings together people and institutions that have the passion, expertise and interests in solving issues abroad relating to rehabilitation medicine. It works with universities, governments, and NGOs to enhance medical rehabilitation around the world. For more information, see [www.RehabForum.org](http://www.RehabForum.org).

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