

New rehab centre a lifeline for young and old

By SANDRA MOANED
Special to The Champion

It comes without warning and leaves devastation in its wake. It is called a stroke and Jean Caine had one early in June while sitting in an armchair in her southeast Oakville home late one afternoon.

Unable to stand or move her left arm, and with a prickly sensation running along the side of her face, she immediately telephoned her family for help.

Ms Caine, who will only admit to never seeing 70 again, spent four days in the intensive care unit of the Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH) followed by three months in the rehabilitation unit.

"It was a terrible shock because I'm a business woman who went to work every day and to suddenly not be able to do for myself was a terribly traumatic experience," said Ms Caine, owner of CHWO Radio.

Two weeks ago she was discharged from the new \$2 million, 39-bed rehabilitation program at OTMH that was officially opened recently. Now Ms Caine is an out-patient in the Step Up Program that continues on where the in-patient rehabilitation program left off.

Wheelchair only temporary

Ms Caine said without the rehabilitation program and the excellent care she received from the staff she would not have gotten better.

"I'm up on my feet walking around, when I never thought I would be, and I'm back in my own home, which I never thought I would be," said she said.

She still relies on a wheelchair or a walker much of the time to get around, but insists this is only temporary.

Undergoing rehabilitation therapy is something Ms Caine finds "very ironic" since she has devoted her life as a volunteer for rehabilitation services.

She and her late husband Howard became acquainted with rehab when their daughter, Pamela Caine-Stokes, was confined to a wheelchair after contracting polio as a young child in 1949.

They were active in rehabilitation issues for so many years the

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JEAN CAINE

March of Dimes honoured them three years ago by naming their building at the corner of Robinson and Trafalgar after the Caines. It's called the Jean and Howard Caine Centre. The apartment building is specially designed so disabled people can live independently.

Now Ms Caine has become the unofficial spokesperson for the hospital's new rehabilitation unit and is fiercely supportive of the program.

"It is important because it is not just for stroke victims or the elderly, but for children or anyone who needs rehabilitation to get their limbs functioning again and to get back into the rhythm of their lives," said Ms Caine, who was unable to lift her arm to comb her own hair when she was first admitted.

Unit like home

The 39-bed unit and out-patient Step-Up Program occupy the third floor of the hospital known as Three West. Patients stay an average of 28 days in the home-like rehabilitation unit.

In addition to many common areas, the unit contains a dining room where patients are encouraged to take their meals, and an Independent Living Centre (ILC) for assessing patient's independence.

The ILC, the last stop before discharge, looks like an apartment with its separate kitchen and cozy sitting area. Its purpose is to simulate situations patients would experience at home like getting on and off a sofa, in and out of a regular bed and preparing a meal on their own in the fully-equipped kitchen.

Called 'functional independence', patients learn how to wash, dress, feed, walk — all activities of daily living that we normally do without thinking — by themselves.

This is accomplished through a team approach that encompasses nurses, physicians, physiotherapists, social workers, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, discharge planners, dietitians, respiration therapists and recreational therapists.

"The beauty of a unit like this is it can be totally coordinated so the people who are working to help you dress are working with the people who are building your strength up etc.," said Ms Caine.



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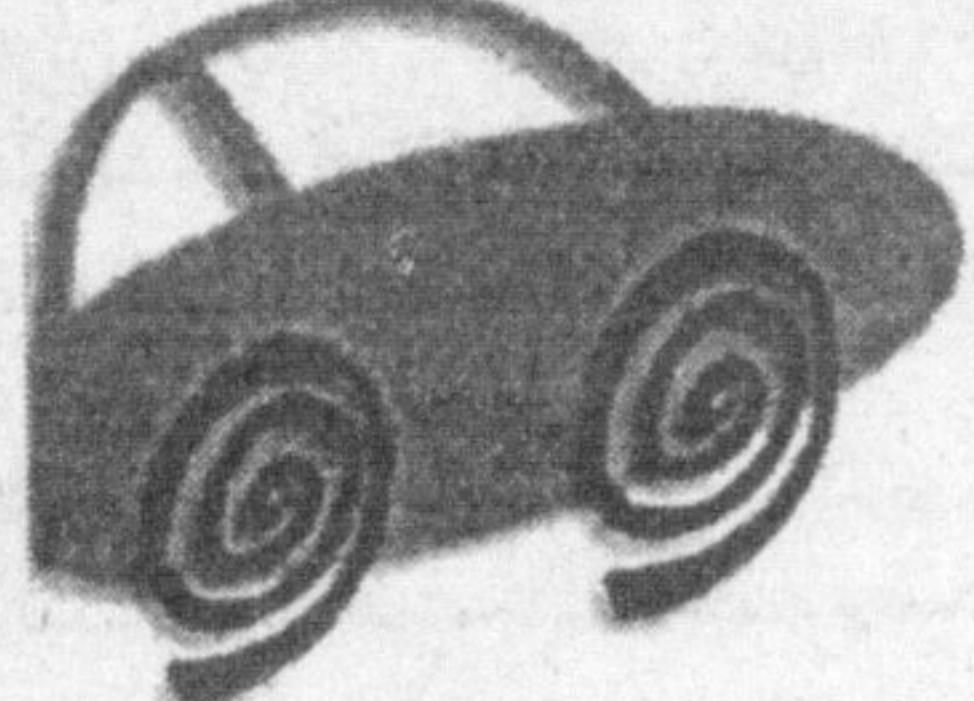
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