

Overcoming COVID-19 is half the battle for patients. Then comes the recovery.

The healthcare heroes at West Suburban Medical Center in Oak Park realized early on that growing cases would mean a growing need for recovery services. At the same time, the novel coronavirus presented this challenge: how to provide therapy safely in the absence of a standard of care.

Chief Operating Officer Luke Therasri pulled together a team to address this critical concern: Director of Rehabilitation Services Meghan Bisping, PT, DPT; Rona Bucal, RN-BC, LNHA; and Jason Gruss, MD, Medical Director for Subacute Rehabilitation. In a matter of days, they developed a new Subacute Rehabilitation (SAR) unit specifically for COVID-19 patients.

The team established an innovative new protocol for accepting and treating COVID-19 patients, then converted a portion of the hospital's SAR unit into a COVID unit so those patients can receive the occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech language pathology services needed to recover successfully. The new unit opened on April 3 with the hospital's first admitted COVID-19 patient.

"We have an amazing group of therapists who are dedicated to caring for all patients, no matter what their needs," Bisping said, noting that these healthcare heroes work in close proximity to COVID-19 patients and are adept at providing in-room therapy to maintain necessary patient isolation precautions.

Nurses also work closely with COVID-19 patients and, as healthcare heroes, have stepped into the role of assisting therapists.

"Sub-acute rehab nurses and patient care technicians continue to deliver excellent care amid the COVID-19 outbreak," Bucal said. "It is a team effort to support the care of patients and families."

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