50 Years Ago in CORR

The Use of Stand-up and Step-up Exercises in Rehabilitation

Gerald G. Hirschberg MD CORR 1958;12:30–46

Rehabilitation medicine (or physiatry) has advanced remarkably in the past 50 years [3]. Our symposium this month is devoted to the rehabilitation of patients after total joint arthroplasty and documents some of those types of advances, even within the past 5–10 years. Our Classic, “Application of Curative Therapy in the Ward” by Henry Chase Marble [2] likely documents some of the early attitudes about physiotherapy in 1920:

“During the past few months the terms have crept into use: Occupational Therapy, Physio Therapy, as if each were an end unto itself, each the only factor necessary to heal the wounded man. This is a serious mistake. Let us not be led astray from the object of the Medical Corps even in thought and talk of this therapy and that the therapy but let us unite them all under a competent surgeon, pool all the resources and make towards a successful whole.”

The American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation was officially recognized by the Advisory Board of Medical Specialties (now the American Board of Medical Specialties) in 1947. Recognition was a struggle against the attitudes reflected by Marble, and in the words of Dr. Gordon Martin, the APBMR

historian, “The formation of the ABPMR did not come easily and is a tribute to tenacity and unshakable vision” [3]. The first chapter of the official history of the APBMR is in fact entitled, “The Struggle for Recognition: 1936–1947” [3].

In the first part of the 20th century, much of what came under the purview

of physical medicine and rehabilitation might be termed visible disabilities such as paralysis (polio, paraplegia and quadriplegia, stroke), amputations, and deformities. In 1958, CORR published a 170-page symposium devoted to rehabilitation. Almost all of these 16 contributions deal with the visible sorts of medical problems. The sole

Fig. 11 Rise of stairs gives patient the feeling of being closer to the ground and lessens fear of erect position. (Reprinted with permission and ©Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, from Hirschberg GG. The use of stand-up and step-up exercise in rehabilitation. *Clin Orthop Relat Res.* 1958;12:30–46.)

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exception is an article on electromyography in neck and shoulder disorders [1] where the focus is on the diagnosis of painful conditions, rather than the treatment.

We highlight here one of the articles from that symposium, “The Use of Stand-up and Step-up Exercises in Rehabilitation” by Dr. Gerald Hirschberg from the Poliomyelitis Respiratory and Rehabilitation Center of the Fairmont Hospital of Alameda County, California. Dr. Hirschberg

emphasized the importance of the use of stair climbing to rehabilitate weakened trunk and extremity muscles (Figs. 11 and 12). Such exercises, he noted, were more effective than others, required only readily available tools, were inexpensive, and applicable to many patients regardless of mental or psychological limitations.

In the latter part of the 20th century, physical medicine (and rehabilitation medicine) became a specialty unto its own, covering the diagnosis,

evaluation, and treatment of a wide range of conditions including chronic pain (the invisible disabilities) and various psychosocial problems leading to impairment and/or disability. Practitioners can now subspecialize in sports medicine, pain medicine or neuromuscular medicine (including electromyography), or the rehabilitation of spinal cord, stroke, or brain injury. Physiatrists often lead multidisciplinary teams of physical therapists, occupational therapists, and

Fig. 12 Step-up exercises combine the strengthening effect of several gymnastic exercises. (Reprinted with permission and ©Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, from Hirschberg GG. The use of stand-up and step-up exercise in rehabilitation. *Clin Orthop Relat Res.* 1958;12:30–46.)

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dieticians, and collaborate with surgeons, internists, pediatricians, and others to manage patients with short- and long-term disabilities. Their progress as a field is indeed a testament to “tenacity and an unshakable vision.”

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