

MEDIA RELEASE

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OT helps patient regain her independence

Marjorie Shields was enjoying a weekend at the Gold Coast with family when she got out of bed one morning and found her legs wouldn't work and her speech was slurred.

After five weeks at St Andrews Hospital receiving treatment for stroke, she transferred to the Rehabilitation Unit at the Toowoomba Hospital to re-learn some of the everyday activities most people take for granted.

During her stay at the Rehab Unit, she has been working with Occupational Therapist (OT) Darren Anderson, along with a number of other allied health staff including physiotherapists and speech pathologists.

"While Marjorie has been staying here one of the things we have been particularly working on is her upper limb strength and movement.

"This includes doing exercises to strengthen and stretch her arm, as well as practising functional activities such as eating, dressing and showering.

"When someone has a stroke there is an area of the brain that gets damaged so we do these things to encourage the brain to work around the damaged area and find new pathways to get the message through," Mr Anderson said.

Part of the work includes an upper limb group, which Ms Shields attends four mornings per week in the Rehab Unit's gym.

"I enjoy going to the gym. I look forward to going each day.

"When I first came here I couldn't even make a fist or grip anyone's fingers. Now I can open my hand and use it to hold things," she said.

Mr Anderson said one of his aims as an OT was to work with Ms Shields to regain some of her independence and to get back to being able to do some of the things she previously enjoyed.

For Ms Shields, this includes gardening, shopping and seeing shows at the Empire Theatre.

"It's a very different lifestyle. I used to be quite independent.

"I hope I can get back to doing some of those things by myself," she said.

Ms Shields will soon leave the Rehab Unit but will continue to be supported by the hospital's Transition Care Program, which includes OTs, as she progresses back to living in her own home again. She has already had one home visit organised by the Rehabilitation Unit.

“It was lovely to be home again. It gave me confidence,” Ms Shields said.

“I think I’m a bit hard on myself sometimes,” she said.

Mr Anderson said Ms Shields was making good progress.

“Some people never get movement back in their arms or legs after a stroke so Marjorie is doing very well,” he said.

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Photo caption: Stroke victim Marjorie Shields undertakes strength and coordination exercises with OT Darren Anderson at the Toowoomba’s Hospital Rehab Unit.

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