



## Shepherd Center Continues to Pioneer Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Rehabilitation Care Amid a Changing Healthcare Landscape

*Hospital Delivers Level 1 Rehabilitation<sup>®</sup>, Helping People Return to Their Homes and Lives*

Shepherd Center is a recognized world leader in defining, measuring and delivering superior-quality rehabilitation care for people who have sustained life-altering spinal cord and brain injuries, strokes and other neurological conditions.

By establishing a Level 1 Rehabilitation<sup>®</sup> designation, Shepherd Center created an intuitive way for advanced trauma centers to grasp the hospital's unique ability to handle complex patients. Shepherd Center hopes states and/or national healthcare rating organizations will adopt a process to tier rehabilitation facilities as has been done for trauma centers.

"With a 40-plus year history, we are adept at providing care at the same intensity as the most highly qualified trauma center and, therefore, represent an important partner in helping to care for these patients with complex conditions," says Mitch Fillhaber, senior vice president of corporate development and managed care at Shepherd Center.

Brain and spinal cord injuries are complex by their very nature. People who sustain these catastrophic injuries require specialized rehabilitation and have very specific needs across the continuum of recovery.

Similar to a Level 1 trauma center that offers the most resources to acutely injured patients, Shepherd Center provides a full continuum of Level 1 Rehabilitation<sup>®</sup> services ranging from intensive medical care and comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation to outpatient and lifelong wellness programs that help maximize recovery.

In fact, Shepherd Center is the only rehabilitation facility in the nation with an intensive care unit (ICU) and acute medical service on site. Shepherd can admit patients to its ICU from trauma center ICUs, allowing some patients to begin the rehabilitation process while still in the ICU – much sooner than other rehabilitation hospitals. Research shows early intervention can optimize recovery, often translating into improved patient outcomes and avoidance of a host of complications, including skin breakdown, bowel and urinary tract management problems, respiratory distress and muscle spasms, and the associated costs. Patients who receive such timely, specialized care tend to report greater self-efficacy and are less likely to be depressed.

"It's the best investment that can be made in helping someone get their life back," says Donald Peck Leslie, M.D., medical director emeritus at Shepherd Center.

Not surprisingly, Shepherd Center is consulted on a regular basis by general rehabilitation and other programs nationally and internationally because of its collective knowledge of the physiology and anatomy of catastrophic injuries and the uniqueness of individual cases. Spinal cord and brain injuries can trigger a cascade of health issues that, if not rapidly and appropriately identified and addressed, can lead to further functional declines and increased costs.

"Beyond direct patient care and referrals, we serve as an extension of many rehabilitation teams, for example, offering best practices and solutions to help them

manage high-risk patients over a lifetime, and ensure they are meeting optimal standards,” Fillhaber says. “Our clinicians are also accustomed to assessing complications early on and have the expertise to manage them and prevent further problems.”

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### **Building Alliances**

Now, more than ever, trauma centers and healthcare consumers are seeking rehabilitation partners that specialize in complex care. It’s this kind of Level I Rehabilitation® that is offered by Shepherd Center that can help improve outcomes and reduce hospital readmission rates from rehabilitation settings.

To this end, Shepherd Center recently signed an affiliation agreement with Stratus Healthcare, a clinically integrated network in central and south Georgia. This agreement designates Shepherd as the tertiary and quaternary rehabilitation partner for patients with spinal cord and acquired brain injury and neurological disorders that generally exceed the resources of local rehabilitation facilities.

“We hope this model will catch on with payers and health systems that are building networks with high-performing rehabilitation partners,” Fillhaber adds.

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## **What Shepherd Center Patients and Partners Can Expect**

By coming to Shepherd Center – or partnering with the hospital – patients gain access to unparalleled, compassionate expertise in treating these types of injuries and related health issues that can arise. This expertise stems, in part, from the sheer volume of patients Shepherd Center treats each year in its inpatient acquired brain injury (ABI) and spinal cord injury (SCI) rehabilitation programs – in addition to medical and surgical patients who have complications related to these types of injuries. As a result, the hospital can achieve better results and outcomes for its patients.

“A lot of rehabilitation comes down to the expertise of the therapists and the relationships that they form with the patients and families,” says Mark Hinrichs, M.D.,

chief of rehabilitation service at Emory University’s Grady Memorial Hospital campus in Atlanta. “The magic of Shepherd Center is its comprehensive, interdisciplinary care in which everyone communicates effectively and consistently with one another so that everyone is on the same page and headed in the same direction with the same focus.”

And patients remain at the center of all rehabilitation planning. From day one, Shepherd Center’s programs and services are uniquely tailored to individual patients.

Shepherd patients have access to:

- Cutting-edge equipment and technologies;
- An integrated team of doctors, nurses, occupational, physical, speech and recreational therapists, psychologists, nutritionists, among others, who focus holistically on what is needed and when;
- Early, intensive and advanced rehabilitation, with most patients participating in four to five hours of therapy each day. Even in the ICU, aggressive physical therapy is started at some level.
- Extensive education about their specific injury or illness with tools for how to manage post-discharge to ensure continuity of care and lower the likelihood of readmission;
- Outpatient and transition services to provide a full continuum of care.

A typical inpatient stay at Shepherd Center averages 43 days, but ranges from four to six weeks, which gives patients the best chance of maximizing their recovery and having a rehabilitation experience that brings healing and hope.

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*“Shepherd serves as both a teacher and an asset for hospitals worried about costs related to identifying complications from these types of injuries and preventing problems because it’s our exclusive focus. Our acute-care capabilities provide added value for the patient, facilitate earlier referrals and also can help trauma centers turn over beds more quickly and help transition patients into rehabilitation more quickly.”*

– Mitch Fillhaber, Shepherd Center’s Senior Vice President of Corporate Development and Managed Care

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## Shepherd Center Outcomes Speak for Themselves

On average, patients who discharge from Shepherd Center have outcomes that consistently exceed national averages for people with spinal cord and brain injury. Shepherd patients have higher degrees of functional improvement and are more likely to return home and be more independent. Visit our patient outcomes page.

More patients are able to get back to work, school, being a parent and contributing to their communities. Other markers of success are Shepherd Center's low, hospital-acquired infection rates and its ability to wean patients from the ventilator.

"As a trauma surgeon, I'm charged with making sure patients are stabilized and then referring them on to get the best possible support and rehabilitation," says Mark Walker, M.D., a local trauma surgeon working with Atlanta Medical Center. "Shepherd Center's long-term commitment and interdisciplinary team approach makes it a natural partner; it's the jewel [in rehabilitation care]."

## Rehabilitation Culture and Experience Matter

The culture at Shepherd Center gives patients – even the most severely injured – a sense of control over their situation. Patients are not only attempting to recover from their injury, they are learning a new way of life and establishing a "new normal."

"It's not just about how we help them, but teaching them how they can help themselves," Dr. Leslie says. "Shepherd Center is where a person with a debilitating injury or illness can begin to put their life back together, and it's our specialty. We recognize that it's an educational process just as much as it's a healing process."

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*Patients at Shepherd Center get more than just medical care; they get an experience that brings healing and hope. As Alana Shepherd, co-founder of the hospital, likes to share, "It's a place where hope begins again."*

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## Your Partner in Rehabilitation Care

Shepherd Center can serve as an educator and asset for hospitals by:

- Treating complex cases;
- Relaying best practices for quality patient care and recovery, and how to manage and prevent

secondary complications that can significantly delay rehabilitation;

- Helping trauma centers turn over beds more quickly and get patients into intensive rehabilitation more quickly;
- Offering up-to-date, practical educational tools for patients and families: [www.braininjury101.org](http://www.braininjury101.org) and [www.spinalinjury101.org](http://www.spinalinjury101.org) (Hospitals can license this content for play on their in-hospital TV channels.)
- Providing a program to manage high-risk patients post-discharge.

Shepherd Center is also involved in cutting-edge research to help advance the field and find the best possible treatments to improve function and get people back to pre-injury activities. For example, studies have included: tests of robotic exoskeletal devices to help people walk; an intrathecal Baclofen pump that when implanted can help control muscle spasticity; and stem cell research in people with spinal cord injury. The Center also houses the largest recreation therapy program in the nation – a donor-funded program to help people re-integrate into their lives and communities.

Shepherd Center is recognized for its role in advocating for people with spinal cord and brain injuries and related disabilities.

"It's not a slam dunk that people with these types of injuries will always have access to the resources they need," Dr. Hinrichs says. "These are human beings with many years of life ahead of them. Shepherd Center has a rich history and a level of influence to advocate for this population, which is critically important."

## It's Always Been a Family Affair

From its humble beginnings, Shepherd Center was the vision of the Shepherd family, whose son, James, was injured while bodysurfing off the coast of Rio de Janeiro when he was just 22 years old.

Today, the hospital is seen as an extended family for thousands, and works together to help patients and their families obtain the care, skills and confidence they need to return to living their lives as independently and fully as possible. Engaging caregivers is seen as such an integral part of the rehabilitation process that Shepherd Center offers families and loved ones complimentary on-campus or near-campus housing for those who live more than 60 miles from Atlanta.

## SHEPHERD CENTER HIGHLIGHTS

- 40-plus years of history in rehabilitation medicine
- *U.S. News & World Report* ranks Shepherd Center **among the top 10 rehabilitation hospitals in the nation.**
- **More than 500 U.S. hospitals**, including major trauma centers, refer their patients to us.
- People have come to Shepherd Center from all **50 states and about 60 foreign countries.**
- **38 years old** – That’s the average age of our patients – much younger than most other rehabilitation facilities. The goal is to help people in the prime of their lives be able to return to school, work, parenting and living life.
- **More than 8 out of 10** patients return home – more than the national average.
- We treat about **1,000 patients a year** in our inpatient spinal cord and brain programs and another 600 through our outpatient Day Programs.
- **0 cases** of ventilator-associated pneumonia or central-line blood infections

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Learn More about Shepherd Center: **[shepherd.org](http://shepherd.org)**

Visit our Patient Outcomes Page: **[shepherd.org/patient-programs/outcomes](http://shepherd.org/patient-programs/outcomes)**

Explore Educational Resources: **[myshepherdconnection.org](http://myshepherdconnection.org)**