



Location: PruittHealth – Savannah

Aquatic Therapy's New Role in Emerging Senior Living Trends

SPONSORED BY



www.hydroworx.com
800.753.9633



info@seniorhousingnews.com | 312.268.2420

Aquatic Therapy's New Role in Emerging Senior Living Trends

Providers incorporate state-of-the-art therapy pools to meet resident needs, staff goals

As the senior living industry gets more and more competitive to attract residents and recruit employees, operators are increasingly relying on cutting-edge amenities and technologies to set themselves apart.

Amid this fierce competition, providers that have implemented state-of-the-art aquatic therapy pools are emerging on top in the race to win long-time residents and loyal, best-in-class staff.

The draw of aquatic therapy pools has providers enjoying unprecedented demand for their wellness centers, steady success for their “pre-hab” clients, improved Resource Utilization Group (RUG) Scores and impressive revenue streams, in addition to a staff that’s excited to come to work. Here’s how aquatic therapy pools are helping senior living providers deliver on their wellness, rehabilitation and financial goals, all while improving seniors’ quality of life.

1. Making Way for Wellness

“Wellness” is not just a buzzword in senior care—it’s a major selling point for marketing teams, and it’s becoming a must for residents of all ages.

More and more, senior living operators are looking to wellness programs to keep residents healthy and active, and they’re adding entire buildings dedicated to enabling wellness throughout the senior care continuum.

“In the past five years, there has been a heightened awareness regarding whole-person wellness in senior living communities,” wrote the Mather Lifeways Healthy Aging Institute in its most recent Survey of Whole Person Wellness in Continuing Care Retirement Communities, published in 2013. “While models may vary between communities, the basic premise is usually the same; cultivate a culture of wellness for residents, staff and the community by considering the whole person—body, mind and spirit—and improve the quality of life, minimize illness and functional loss and reduce healthcare costs.”

In its survey of residents nationwide, Mather Lifeways found 88% of respondents ranking 5 or greater on a seven-point scale measuring the importance of wellness programs to resident satisfaction.

Senior living communities are seeing the benefits of building for wellness firsthand. Stonehill Care Center, a 220-bed continuing care retirement community (CCRC) in Dubuque, Iowa, has taken its wellness program to a new level by making it easy for all

88%
of [senior living residents]
ranking 5 or greater on a seven-
point scale measuring the
importance of wellness programs

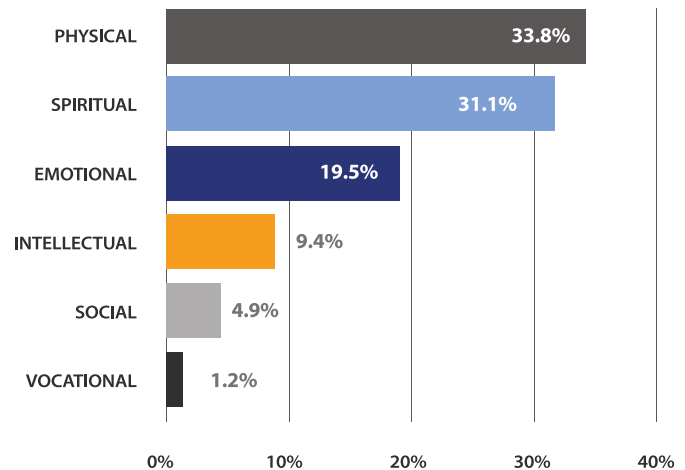
Dubuque seniors to participate in activities to boost their wellness, whether or not they currently reside in the CCRC.

In 2013, Stonehill added a wellness center to its campus. The center is open to the general public, and during its launch year, Stonehill made free memberships available to anyone age 65 or over. The Wellness Center, which now boasts more than 3,000 members, is meant to give seniors a better quality of life as they age, says Rachel McDermott, who worked at Stonehill for seven years until she departed as Stonehill's director of rehabilitation in the spring of 2016.

The Wellness Center is designed to be a safe, comfortable space for seniors to learn exercise routines that will keep them mobile and healthy. Physical therapists and wellness directors populate Stonehill's Wellness Center, offering their guidance to seniors who may not have exercised in some time, or who may never have truly worked out at all.

There's exercise equipment, as well as an aquatic therapy pool with an underwater treadmill for seniors to use at their leisure.

Seniors respond: What is the most important aspect of wellness in your life?



Source: Senior Housing News 2016

Stonehill Wellness Revenue Overview

- 1,712 MEMBERS OVER 55 YEARS OF AGE PAYING \$10 / MONTH
- 951 MEMBERS UNDER 55 PAYING \$35 / MONTH
- 413 EMPLOYEES AND FAMILY MEMBERS WITH FREE MEMBERSHIPS

MONTHLY REVENUE
\$50,405

ANNUAL REVENUE
\$604,860

"It's important for seniors to be able to come in and not feel judged," McDermott says. "The Wellness Center is a safe place to come in and learn how to exercise."

This is key in the minds of those designing and building senior living communities.

"High-tech fitness and physical therapy spaces that have the latest equipment to help people with strength and balance show that the community understands the importance of wellness," Elisabeth Borden, founding principal for Colorado-based firm The Highland Group, said in a 2016 industry report.



2. Building for Rising Acuity

Residents' rising acuity is a challenge senior living providers have been experiencing for several years. Now, the most innovative providers are building accordingly to best respond.

Not only are they able to help manage residents' care needs, but in the process they are growing occupancy, reducing transitions to higher-acuity settings and accommodating a greater variety of cases.

In years past, the average senior living resident moved into a senior living community when he or she was approximately 72 years old and had one or two chronic conditions. Now, the average resident moves in at age 83 and frequently has three or more chronic conditions.

Senior living providers that have the ability to care for the highest-acuity seniors will be the best prepared for the future—and will be a step ahead of their competition who remain ill-prepared to care for the sickest patients.

Stonehill Care Center opted to put an aquatic therapy pool (see sidebar) in its Wellness Center for this very reason, and the CCRC has seen its revenue increase dramatically.

"We really wanted to be a solution for everybody, even the really, really challenging patients that other skilled nursing facilities or rehabilitation centers may turn away," McDermott says.

The plan has paid off. For instance, McDermott recalls one resident with several comorbidities whose physician said he would never return to live at home. The man, overweight and bound to a wheelchair, hadn't walked in 10 years. Therapists at Stonehill

“

We really wanted to be a solution for everybody, even the really, really challenging patients that other skilled nursing facilities or rehabilitation centers may turn away.

- Rachel McDermott

Former Director of Rehab at Stonehill Care Center

”

Success Stories: State-of-the-Art Therapy Pools

Driving Revenue With State of the Art Wellness

Aquatic therapy can be a game-changer for some physical therapy patients — especially for seniors who are hoping to regain or maintain mobility.

Pool-based physical therapy allows a patient to simulate walking and other activities without the joint impact and bodyweight they would deal with on land. That means that a patient who may be able to complete only about 10 minutes of exercise on land could potentially complete an hour of exercise in the pool, says Rachel McDermott, Stonehill's former director of rehabilitation, who oversaw implementation of the therapy pool.

It's also easier to breathe during aquatic therapy, says Kimmer

O'Neill, the director of rehabilitation at Port Charlotte Rehab Center in Port Charlotte, Florida, making the practice ideal for seniors with pulmonary issues. "In the pool, seniors can work longer, so we can build up their stamina longer," she says.

While aquatic therapy can be done in an Olympic-size pool, therapists report mixed results due to patients feeling crowded, cold water temperatures, or patients having a hard time hearing their therapists due to the space.

That's where a smaller aquatic therapy pool, like a HydroWorx pool, comes in. The pools, which therapists fill with warm water to soothe patients' joints, can range anywhere in size from that of a small car to that of an average living room.

They're also customizable to fit the needs of different care providers. Seniors can walk on the underwater treadmills that come in all of the pools, while therapists analyze their gait using an add-on underwater camera.

At Stonehill Care Center in Dubuque, Iowa, the HydroWorx pool became so popular with seniors in the area that they had to open an outpatient therapy clinic to handle the demand,

says McDermott. "We grew leaps and bounds," she says.

In 2012, before opening the Wellness Center with the HydroWorx pool, Stonehill billed a total of 48 one-hour outpatient units. The next year, Stonehill billed a total of 4,160 one-hour units — a marked increase.

Clear Choice Health Care's leadership has also noted a rise in employee engagement due to the addition of the HydroWorx pool.

"Our therapists fight over who gets to get in the pool every day," O'Neill says.

It's easy to see why. In addition to being an attractive place to conduct therapy, HydroWorx pools also improve the therapists' efficiency and productivity, making their work more manageable and netting better results overall. This led to improved employee satisfaction within the organization.

"We weren't overwhelming our staff," McDermott says.



THE POWER OF POOL THERAPY

HydroWorx-equipped communities have watched appointments surge after implementing their HydroWorx pools. At Clear Choice Health Care's Port Charlotte Rehab Center, which now houses two HydroWorx systems, the center has seen appointments grow from 30 appointments per month five years ago to 1,397 appointments in one recent month.

enrolled him in aquatic therapy in the pool, where he practiced standing and, eventually, walking. He ended up returning home, after all.

Aquatic therapy pools are “outstanding” for patients over 75, according to Kimmer O’Neill, the director of rehabilitation at Port Charlotte Rehab Center in Port Charlotte, Florida. The center has 132 beds, 60 of which are for long-term care patients and 72 of which are for short-term rehab patients.

The pools make rehabilitation and exercise vastly different experiences for many seniors, especially those who normally have pain when exercising. “They don’t feel the pain of their joints when they’re exercising in the pool,” O’Neill explains. “It’s so much more pain-free than what they’d be doing on land.”

This includes patients with end-stage chronic diseases, like Parkinson’s disease or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

“Because of our pool, we’ve helped a much wider variety of patients with different diagnoses,” O’Neill says.

The warm water used in HydroWorx aquatic therapy pools has been proven to decrease inflammation and reduce stress on seniors’ joints, resulting in higher compliance and less pain during rehab sessions. This offers enormous potential for Medicare-certified providers to increase their RUG Scores and improve patient mix.

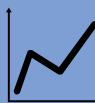
When high-acuity patients can be treated so effectively at senior living communities or long-term care facilities, the whole concept of what long-term care facilities are can change for the better.

“We wanted to change the concept of what long term care facilities are, and what they can be,” McDermott says. “We’re not a place where people go to die; we’re a place where people go move and to exercise.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Wellness programs featuring aquatic therapy pools can serve both the resident population and staff, and are proven means of driving business from outside the community.



Rising acuity is a challenge for senior living providers, but it’s also an opportunity. Providers with aquatic therapy pools are more prepared to address the diverse care needs of residents across the spectrum, and can reduce hospitalizations and keep census high.



Pre-hab is being conducted among providers with aquatic therapy pools to prepare patients in advance for improved outcomes post-surgery.



Technology found in aquatic therapy pools sets the stage for state-of-the-art services that are driving resident outcomes and are making work more satisfying for staff.



3. Gearing up for Pre-hab

“Pre-hab,” or “pre-rehabilitation,” is a rising trend among those preparing for surgeries—and for seniors in particular.

“Pre-hab” enables seniors to go into surgery as prepared as they can be for the rehabilitation process, McDermott explains.

“Pre-hab ensures seniors go into their surgeries in the best shape that they can possibly be in. After pre-hab, their rehab is quicker, better and faster.”

At Port Charlotte Rehab Center, aquatic therapy in HydroWorx pools has greatly enhanced seniors’ “pre-hab” prior to knee and hip replacement surgeries, O’Neill says. These patients, who are anywhere from 65 to 90 years old, spend three days doing “pre-hab”: one day on land and two days in an aquatic therapy pool. About 1 million people per year have their hip or knee replaced—and any number of them can benefit from strengthening their bodies in anticipation of the rehabilitation they’ll have to go through post-surgery.

A study published in *Anesthesiology* in 2014 found that two months after colorectal cancer surgery, a group of patients in Canada who took part in pre-hab walked significantly farther on average than a group of patients who only participated in post-surgical rehabilitation. Other studies are underway to measure the results of pre-hab.

For senior living providers, having spaces geared toward people preparing for and recovering from surgery can be key when it comes to capturing the entire care continuum.

“It is a really nice continuum of care,” McDermott says. “Seniors can come in as a Wellness Center member, then we’d get them ready for their knee surgery, then they’d come back and stay with us after the surgery for short-term rehab, then they’d come to our outpatient therapy, and then they’d transition back into the Wellness Center, and we’d be able to keep an eye on them.”

4. Building for Technology

Technology is advancing at a fast pace, and senior living is taking note. In fact, failing to incorporate technology into senior living design could cost senior living providers both loss of residents and talented staff.

Now, senior living staff are more tech-savvy than ever before. They know all about the latest technology, and they expect

their employers to use state-of-the art solutions to track metrics, communicate and provide quality resident care. Right now, senior living communities should have Wi-Fi, at the very least, to support the technologies coming online. In order to remain competitive, providers must accommodate new technology seamlessly to attract and retain residents and staff.

Staff satisfaction improves when they can see the results of their work with residents, and providers are increasingly offering technology platforms to measure outcomes in real time.

Future senior living residents, too, will undoubtedly expect different things from senior living communities than their predecessors did, making the case for technology even greater.

A Good Samaritan Society CCRC in Mountain Home, Arkansas, is in the process of expanding existing buildings and adding a center for wellbeing with a HydroWorx pool to its campus. The CCRC is “building for the future” as part of that expansion, explains Chad Huebner, the CCRC’s administrator.

“We felt the need to meet the needs of not just the seniors in the community of today, but for the seniors of the community 10, 15 or 20 years from now,” Huebner says.

In an effort to achieve that goal, Good Samaritan Society opted to incorporate an aquatic therapy pool with state-of-the-art technology built in — a pool, in other words, that’s so much more than just a pool in the eyes of residents and staff. HydroWorx’s aquatic therapy pools feature underwater treadmills, moveable floors, resistance jets, and deep tissue massage; some even come with underwater camera systems to monitor and record a patient’s movements, and computers that can control all of the pool’s functions at the touch of a button.

The HydroWorx pool expands on the traditional concept of a therapy pool by enhancing patients’ comfort, combatting patients’ hesitation and promoting patients’ progress. When both residents and staff are actually excited for aquatic therapy, the possibilities are endless.

Aquatic Therapy and the Bottom Line

Equipping senior living communities or skilled nursing facilities with state-of-the-art services and technology will set providers apart from their competition, not only in attracting residents and their families, but also in recruiting top talent across the care continuum.

By adding state-of-the art aquatic therapy pools to their offerings, senior living providers can draw from a greater base of clientele — both within the community and also outside of it.

Whether through the marketing of effective wellness programs, working with patients in a pre-hab or traditional rehabilitation capacity or simply building to assist a wider array of care needs in light of a rising acuity resident environment, senior housing operators are turning to aquatic therapy pools to successfully stand out in the competitive landscape.

“

We felt the need to meet the needs of not just the seniors in the community of today, but for the seniors of the community 10, 15 or 20 years from now.

- Chad Huebner

Administrator, Good Samaritan Society

”

LEARN MORE
visit **HYDROWORX.COM**
or call **800.753.9633**

