



important because a decline in activity is also associated with the development of other health issues. Ang says, "Patients might say, 'I used to walk all the way across the store, but now I got used to using the cart.' So we might have a slide in cardiac health. As therapists, we're able to find strength and balance deficits and help people improve that."

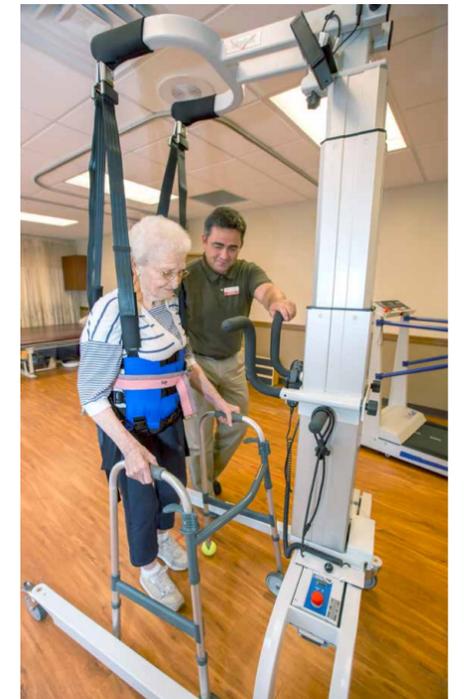
Keeping up that activity and motion is key, and can improve health at any stage. "I have a saying that we need to keep moving so we don't become the chair," says Ang. "I often hear, 'Well, I'm 96, what do you expect?' But I've sent home people age 100+."

Some therapists tap into additional specialized training, such as Parkinson's Wellness Recovery (PWR!), to work with patients who are managing neurological challenges. Through that training, therapists learn to expect more of their patients. Ang says, "When we expect more, we get more. We have a good chance of achieving our goals if we're motivated to do so."

Rennes works with patients to achieve a strong outcome as efficiently and effectively as possible. Families can play a role in helping patients to recover, working with their loved ones to implement exercises and tools of health improvement. "As a therapist, I try to focus on what can I teach you to use in your toolbox to maintain your wellness," says Ang. "We try to do what we can as efficiently as possible to meet the patient's goals."

That may include connecting patients with an assistive device, such as a walker, which may not be cosmetically appealing, but allows residents to stay home a little longer. Outpatient therapists also can provide home assessments to reduce falling hazards in a patient's living space, to train them in the best way to use assistive devices, and offer exercises they can do at home to improve their balance.

"As physical therapists, we have a little extra time to spend with individuals, which allows us sometimes to get in a little more of the core problem," says



Ang. "From an outpatient standpoint, how we're able to empower them for their wellness is a real benefit."

Age alone should never be justification for giving up on what the future can look like. Most of us don't know how many more years we have ahead of ourselves, so staying in as good of health as possible to get the most out of today is truly a lifelong goal.

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Outpatient THERAPY

A PATHWAY TO BETTER HEALTH AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE

COVID-19 has had a wide-reaching impact on the nation's health beyond the virus itself, leading to a growing need for outpatient therapy services. "The pandemic has led to a lot of elderly and middle-aged individuals becoming more sedentary," says Ang Baeten, physical therapist at Rennes Health & Rehab Center - Peshtigo East. "With that, we're finding declines of strength."

But patients who are experiencing these general declines, as well as those recovering from illnesses, injuries, and surgeries, have a chance at a healthier

future with the help from providers who can support their rehabilitation journey. That includes the trained physical, occupational, and speech language therapists who often specialize in issues associated with geriatrics.

These outpatient therapists can help with a general tune-up to help assess and decrease the risk of falls, which are the leading cause of death and serious injury among adults age 65+. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that one in four aging adults suffers a fall each

year. Therapists can test muscle strength, balance, and other factors that can lead increase the risk of falling. Preventing injury due to declines in strength and coordination can also help minimize the growing cost of long-term hospitalizations and recovery in the country.

Therapists also work with clients who are dealing with joint pain, which may be caused by a number of age-related factors. Weight loss and exercise are two big ways to decrease pain on joints. Keeping up good mobility is

