



Rancho Los Amigos

Post-Polio

Support Group

Newsletter - June 2014

Will Insurance Provide a Power Wheelchair?

Reported by Mary Clarke Atwood

Editorial assistance by R. Daggett and D. Miyahara, OTR/L

The September 28, 2013 meeting of the Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group featured speakers Donna Miyahara and Prak Kim representing Academy Medical Equipment. Donna Miyahara, OTR/L, BS, ATP is a Registered Occupational Therapist and Prak Kim, NRRTS is a Rehabilitation Equipment Specialist. They both have a long local history of working with the disabled and their Durable Medical Equipment (DME).

Donna and Prak were introduced as the “New Kids on the Block” because Academy Medical Equipment, the company they represent, relocated and are across Imperial Highway from Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center in Downey, California.

Our leader Richard Daggett introduced Donna as “the best wheelchair vendor in the whole world”. She is an Occupational Therapy graduate of USC and worked at California Children Services for 16 years as a pediatric therapist. Ready for a change in 1990, Donna decided to become a DME provider.

Prak also has many years of experience servicing DME, through Abbey Medical, Lewis Wheelchair, Designing Mobility, South Bay Home Health Care, ATG, etc. Before joining Academy Medical Equipment, Prak and Donna had worked together so they knew they were a good team. Donna referred to Prak as the most important member of their team because he can do anything, fix anything, program anything, and create almost anything!

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The information presented at our meetings and/or contained in this newsletter is solely for information. It is not an endorsement of any product, medication, or individual.

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As DME providers, Donna and Prak travel to wherever their customers are located. They service their customers throughout Southern California.

A few members use relatively new wheelchairs, and we were able to compare them and learn what they liked and did not like about their equipment. We were also impressed with the new Amy brand power wheelchair made in Canada. Our speaker brought one and many of us enjoyed taking a test drive.

Several of our members need new power wheelchairs, so this meeting focused on the information that is required by insurance companies to begin the application process.

Requirements for a Power Chair through Insurance

First the DME provider must determine your financial situation. Do you have insurance, such as Medicare, Medi-Cal, private insurances, or cash? Insurance coverage keeps changing, so your birth date, address, etc. are needed to begin the process. Your medical coverage for that month must be verified before they can proceed.

For Medicare clients, the patient needs to see his physician for a face-to-face evaluation. A prescription for a one-time assessment from a physical therapist is needed for a Group 3 power wheelchair.

An outside therapist, who has nothing to do with the DME company, must assess the patient for a wheelchair in a one-time visit. That evaluation will confirm that the patient cannot walk and why; then the reasons why the patient cannot use a cane or walker, a manual wheelchair, a scooter, or a Group 2 power wheelchair.

Group 1 wheelchairs are semi-portable.

Group 2 wheelchairs are basic power chairs with a Captain's style seat. They may not accommodate complicated electronics.

Group 3 wheelchairs accommodate multiple power motors and may tilt, recline, and have power elevating leg rests.

Seat elevators, transit tie-down options, and stand-up features on a power wheelchair are seldom covered by insurance.

The physical therapist will focus on the categories of equipment above, ruling out each type with a justification as to why it is not appropriate. Next they need to determine the type of

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power wheelchair for which that client will qualify. If the patient does not need the wheelchair in the house, Medicare will not approve it.

Medicare requires a home visit to check all the thresholds and doorways to confirm that they will not impede entering and/or operating a wheelchair inside the house.

Medicare will pay for a new wheelchair every five years, as long as the documentation supports the need - but that is not written “in stone”.

Competitive bidding on Group 2 rental wheelchairs for Medicare patients has recently spread in California to Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The patient needs to find a vendor in his area who will provide the Group 2 rental for which he qualifies.

Academy Medical Equipment

Donna said that her company tries to respond to the needs of each person. They focus on Group 3 chairs and may provide a rental wheelchair for one month if their power wheelchair is being repaired. A written prescription is needed. Medicare considers a new power wheelchair is under warranty for one year.

Statement from the company website:

Founded in 1999, Academy Medical Equipment, Inc., specializes in sales and service of power mobility equipment; specifically, complex rehabilitation wheelchairs and adaptive equipment, alternative communication devices, standard power wheelchairs, and other technological tools that can help make our clients' lives productive and fulfilling.

<http://www.academymedicequipment.com/about.php>:

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RanchoPPSG, 12720 La Reina Avenue, Downey CA 90242

Newsletter Donations Needed

There was an appeal for donations in the last newsletter. It is important to have the funds necessary to continue. We take pride when we can offer timely and informative articles to our readers. Some readers have sent donations in the last year. These were greatly appreciated.

There are two ways you can help. The first, of course, is to assist financially. Mail your donation to Support Groups' Newsletters at 12720 La Reina Avenue, Downey, CA 90242. Make your check out to PSA—Support Groups, and write newsletters in the memo area of the check. The Rancho Los Amigos group publishes on even numbered months and the Orange County group publishes on the odd numbered months. All donations are shared equally.

The second way you can help is to accept the newsletters through your e-mail. Many of you have agreed to this time and money saving step. You will be able to read the newsletters on your computer, and you will still be able to print them and take them with you. Just send your e-mail address to: ranchoppsg@hotmail.com and write e-mail newsletter in the subject line and your name in the message area.

Please remember, no reader will be removed from the mailing list if you do not have e-mail! It would be helpful, however, if you could send us a brief note by regular mail telling us you want to continue receiving the newsletters through the mail. Thank you for your support.

PowerPoint Presentation on Bulbar Polio Available

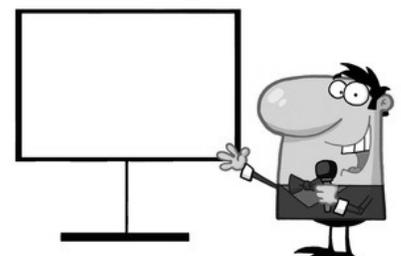
At the April 2014 meeting of the Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group we had a presentation on bulbar polio. We learned that several studies have shown that many of us who had spinal polio also had bulbar polio. When the polio virus damages the nerve connections in the brain stem it is called bulbar polio.

Some polio survivors may deny having bulbar involvement, and say, “I was never in an iron lung.” Bulbar polio causes more than breathing problems. In addition, many polio survivors were very young at onset. They may not remember all of their symptoms.

If you would like a copy, please send an e-mail to:

info@polioassociation.org

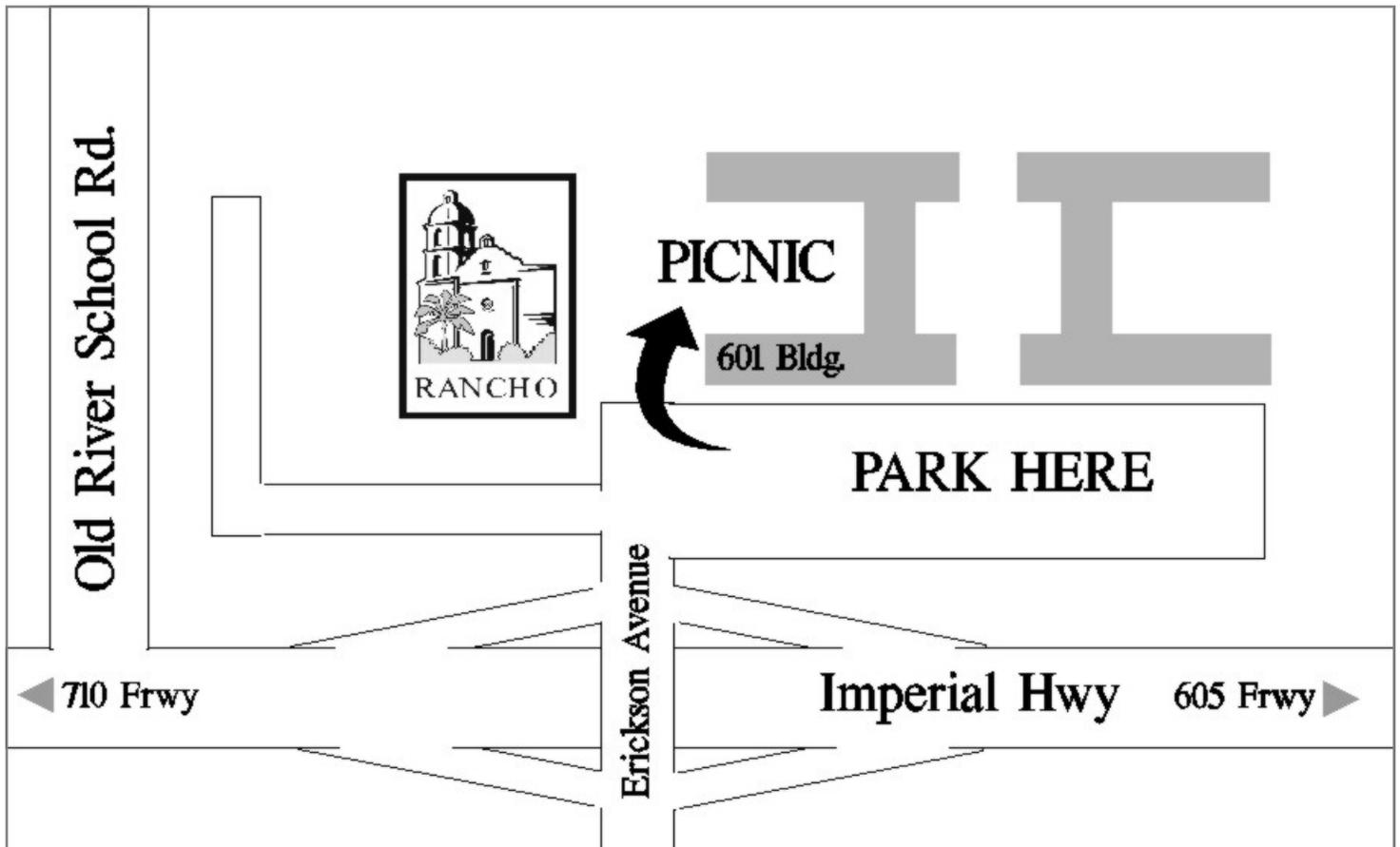
This presentation is available as a PowerPoint file or a PDF file.



Support Group Meeting Notices

Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group:

Saturday, June 28, 2014 - 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. This is our Annual Picnic. Join us for Food, Fun, and Friendship. We always have a good time. We might have a game or two, and we might have a surprise guest. A map is printed below, and if you need additional information please telephone Diane at (562) 861-8128



Post-Polio Support Group of Orange County:

Saturday, July 12, 2014 - To Be Announced

Remember, all support group meetings are open to family members and friends. We encourage you to bring them to the meetings. Your family and friends will learn about polio and post-polio, and they will meet some very nice people. We will enjoy meeting them too.

Rancho Los Amigos PPSG
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Downey, California 90242
USA

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND OR DISABLED

The Rancho Los Amigos Post-Polio Support Group and the Post-Polio Support Group of Orange County share a mailing list and publish newsletters on alternate months. All of our meetings are open to polio survivors, family, and friends.

Our meetings are relaxed, informal, and provide a supportive atmosphere for the exchange of ideas and concerns.

Visit your local support group.

You will be glad you did.