The Pulmonary Rehabilitation Toolkit

www.pulmonaryrehab.com.au
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www.pulmonaryrehab.com.au is an online pulmonary rehabilitation toolkit developed to help health professionals establish pulmonary rehabilitation programs in metropolitan, regional, and rural settings throughout Australia. The toolkit was initiated by the Australian Lung Foundation and the Australian Physiotherapy Association with the aim of providing evidence-based information on current best practice for the practical management of patients referred for pulmonary rehabilitation. The site ranks high in the Google web search engine for the keyword ‘pulmonary rehabilitation’.

The website documents the essential components of a pulmonary rehabilitation program ranging from funding and staffing, through to program design, set-up, and implementation. Considerable detail is provided to enable clinicians to tailor programs to an individuals needs, including tips and hints for transferring a program into the real world.

The patient assessment component is comprehensive and advocates a holistic approach to patient management. It includes details on taking a thorough medical history, assessing exercise capacity, quality of life, shortness of breath, and patient goal setting. Testing guidelines and standardised instructions are provided for field walking tests, as well as links to quality of life, dyspnoea, and problem and goal measurement tools. The exercise training pages are particularly beneficial for health professionals involved in exercise prescription and training in pulmonary rehabilitation. Clear and concise evidence-based guidelines are provided for exercise mode, intensity, duration, and frequency and the application is well demonstrated in two patient case studies. It was also pleasing to note that the site addressed common medical issues arising in pulmonary rehabilitation, such as the use of supplemental oxygen and bronchodilator medication.

Patient education topics and suggested content are also provided. A highlight of this site is the provision of numerous useful resources and marketing tools including patient exercise programs, diagrams, education session plans, a program brochure, referral forms, and letters to referrers. These resources can be individualised with a hospital or program logo and will save users valuable time ‘reinventing the wheel’. Furthermore, the content provided on the site is reinforced by summary cards and checklists of program essentials highlighting the key features of a pulmonary rehabilitation program. The resources provided will no doubt enable health professionals to implement a standardised program. The site’s recommendations are completed with information provided on program evaluation including provision of a patient satisfaction survey.

The main title page inspires confidence in the user with a bold title and easily identifiable sub-headings listing the program components. Links to ‘Latest News’, ‘Site Map and Index’ and the search function are well highlighted. The entire site is accessible and user friendly. The icons and links downloaded very quickly and are easy to manipulate. Site structure is easy to identify with page headings and sub-headings featuring prominently along the top and down the left hand side of every page. Some resources have links on multiple pages so navigation, at times, can be slightly confusing, but only in the sense that users will want to make sure they have not missed accessing all resources.

The site layout, graphics and text are simple, modern, and appealing. The key features of the Australian Lung Foundation and Australian Physiotherapy Association identities are reflected in the green leaf design and blue background. The clear colour scheme and clean layout are consistently carried throughout the site and ensure that the user’s attention is drawn to the contents of the toolkit. There is the option of varying the font size on screen, and underlined links are easily identifiable. The search button and print option is placed prominently on every page. The language is tailored to and appropriate for the intended health professional audience and explanations are clear and concise with their use well demonstrated in the case studies and examples provided.

This site is a tremendous information resource on pulmonary rehabilitation. Users can be satisfied that the toolkit contents are accurate and of high quality, as the authors have ensured that only evidence-based information is included in their recommendations (as demonstrated by the vast number of references provided, many with direct links to the full text article). All authors and sponsors are disclosed with contact information provided, as well as links to useful organisations such as allied health professional organisations, the Asthma Foundation and Council, and the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand.

The authors state that the site will be a ‘living document’ with information being continually updated as new evidence emerges. Users can also subscribe to the toolkit to ensure they are notified of updates. At the time the site was viewed, the ‘FAQ’ and ‘Latest News’ sections were bare. One can assume that these will not remain empty for long as word of the comprehensive nature of this toolkit is spread.

The authors have correctly identified the issues involved in pulmonary rehabilitation, and have provided an innovative, easily accessible and valuable toolkit. No other pulmonary rehabilitation resource on the world wide web was found to be as comprehensive. The Pulmonary Rehabilitation Toolkit is a novel concept which gives clinicians the tools to implement an evidence-based pulmonary rehabilitation program.

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