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PTA 2530

Community Services

One of the lectures that our class had this semester was a presentation from two different individuals that are part of Utah Family Voices. As part of our special populations classes we learn that in addition to treating our patients. As clinicians we can be an advocate for our patients if we can help provide additional lifelines for patients and their families as they struggle to manage new or progressing difficulties when it comes to their functional and eventually their emotional and mental health. One of those additional lifelines is knowing the multiple community services that are available to steer the patients towards.

To learn more about these services our class was divided into small groups to research and present to each other with information regarding certain community services that are available. These can be either a federal aid or local program that is designed to give our patients assistance in managing their functional limitation and disabilities or opportunities at participating in fun activities they may otherwise not be able to do. My group was assigned medical services for adults with disabilities, specifically the Veteran Affairs Medical Center.

As we listened to others presentations as well as shared our presentation to the class I was brought back to the idea that “family members of people with disabilities encounter restrictions in participation in home, work and community life.” when I think of the women from Utah Family Voices that shared their experiences of their lives with children with functional limitations and how their whole lives changed and how one of the first things they lost was contact with the outside world. People don’t understand who are not experiencing your struggles. That is why I feel like the VA is a great source of help for members of the military and their families. There were two things that I learned about when researching that really caught my attention that I can see can really help to eliminate some of the participation restrictions that families experience. Especially when referring to members of the military.

In the military there is a large population of patients who have experienced amputations. This can cause a great deal of difficulties for families and for the patients. One of the programs they have is called a therapeutic apartment stay. Here patients and their families can learn what they will be dealing with when they go home. They can learn how to use different adaptations that they will be using at their own home. Here they can learn to make the necessary changes to make their lives easier. The other thing I learned that I believe will help with all aspects of their lives is a study program that the VA is a part of. Members of the military who qualify for the VA insurance program and have had a limb amputated can receive a relatively newer type of prosthetic. This new procedure is Osteointegration. This is giving amputees and their families an opportunity at less restricted lives. Many of the complications of having a prosthetic are being eliminated. The time-consuming care for residual limbs and complication from prosthetics that don’t fit well can become a thing of the past. The opportunity to participate in certain sports or even reduce use of a wheelchair altogether is possible. These are things that prior to this surgery kept families and patient from doing what they would like. They can now maintain relatively normal lives instead of becoming immobilized and experience the deficits that come isolation and immobility.

The military seems to harbor a great community for individuals and families who have experienced some type of functional limitation or disability. However every community group that families can take advantage of only make their lives that much better. I enjoyed learning about the VA medical center and what they provide as well as the other programs available in the state of Utah. The most important thing is that we know about them and where to steer patients and their families to ease the burdens that they may be experiencing.