

On Her Way Home with Specialized Rehabilitation at Hillcrest Commons

Providing care with
promptness, sensitivity,
respect compassion, and
integrity.



From left: Hillcrest Commons' Debbie Jarck, NP, Shalahmah Salillas, PT, Kathleen and Fred Brosseau



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Case Study

It has been a long, winding road for 71-year-old Kathleen Brosseau and her husband, Fred, who has been with her every step of the way during more than two years of steps forward and backward. Kathleen, who lived with her husband in Potsdam, New York at the time, underwent an emergency heart surgery in July 2008 after a doctor at St. Peter's Hospital in Albany discovered a myxoma (tumor) in the right ventricle, presenting an immediate life-threatening condition. The surgery was successful, however, soon after, Kathleen's lungs collapsed and she was placed on a ventilator in the intensive care unit and remained at St. Peter's for nearly six months. She was admitted to other rehabilitation facilities to regain her strength and improve her breathing, but she never seemed to make consistent progress – "one step forward and two steps back," as Fred put it. It wasn't until she came to Hillcrest Commons that she was able to finally progress fully. After being admitted at Hillcrest Commons in January it was Berkshire Medical Center Hospitalist Sukhpal Mann, MD, who discovered something that had been missed until that point. Kathleen was suffering from a rectal fistula and Jose Heisecke, MD, of Berkshire Surgical Associates would perform the procedure to address it at BMC. With the specialized combination of rehabilitation, respiratory therapy and nursing at Hillcrest Commons she was finally on her way home.

Interdisciplinary Team Treatment Plan

Prior to, and following, her final surgery at BMC the staff at Hillcrest Commons provided a combination of physical, occupational and speech therapy, specialized respiratory therapy, and nursing care to help Kathleen regain her abilities to be independent.

Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy

- Significantly weakened by her conditions and surgeries, therapists worked to help Kathleen regain strength in her legs with stretching and weights.
- Gradually, as her strength increased, she was able to stand and eventually walk with the assistance of a walker for increasing distances to improve her endurance.
- Therapists helped her regain the ability to transfer and perform ADLs independently.

Respiratory Therapy

- Respiratory therapists have worked to gradually wean Kathleen off the use of a ventilator by implementing trials of Non-invasive pressure support ventilation.
- Staff worked closely with the Berkshire Medical Center Pulmonary specialists – who are among the best in the nation (HealthGrades 2009) – including Daniel Doyle, MD, Jack Ringler, MD, and Boris Murillo, MD.

Speech Therapy

- Therapists worked to strengthen Kathleen's vocal cords with goal-oriented exercises to allow her to speak audibly without the assistance of speaking valve.

Outcome: Now able to walk for greater distances with a walker, and able to perform ADLs, Kathleen looks forward to getting home soon with her husband, Fred.

In the Patient's Own Words: "You couldn't find a better rehab department. They push you where you need to be pushed and they keep you moving forward. I would highly recommend Hillcrest Commons, it's excellent in all disciplines."

