**TRENDS IN REHABILITATION NURSING CARE**

MR. RAVIKANT SHARMA

MEDICAL SURGICAL NURSING (CVTS)

COLLEGE OF NURSING, AUTONOMOUS STATE MEDICAL COLLEGE, FIROZABAD, UTTARPRADESH, INDIA

rvkntsharma03@gmail.com

**INTRODUCTION**

Rehabilitation nursing is a specialty practice that is committed to improving the quality of life for individuals with a disability or a chronic illness. The rehabilitation nurses’ mission is to improve the optimal level of functioning of individuals with a disability or a chronic illness at home and in the community.

The purpose of this role description is to identify and clarify the role of rehabilitation nurses practicing in home care settings and to promote a high degree of professionalism in keeping with the established scope and standards of rehabilitation nursing practice published by the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses.

Throughout this document, the term client refers to a person with an injury or an illness who is receiving healthcare services. The term family refers to significant others as well as to relatives. The term caregiver refers to all paid and unpaid persons providing care.

Rehabilitation nursing is a specialty practice that is committed to improving the quality of life for individuals with a disability or a chronic illness. The rehabilitation nurses’ mission is to improve the optimal level of functioning of individuals with a disability or a chronic illness at home and in the community. The goal of the rehabilitation process is to provide, in collaboration with an interdisciplinary healthcare team that includes the client, a holistic approach to nursing care that maximizes the client’s independence and mastery of self-care activities. Physical, emotional, social, cultural, educational, developmental, and spiritual dimensions are considered when team members establish goals for the client.

**THE REHABILITATION NURSE**

The rehabilitation nurse acts as an advocate for clients and their families during the re-entry process from the hospital into the home and the community.

The rehabilitation nurse coordinates the services provided by the interdisciplinary team and enacts the plan of care that has been developed by the client, the physician, and the rehabilitation team. In this role, the rehabilitation nurse functions as a clinical resource, a care coordinator, an advocate, a primary care provider, a teacher, a consultant, and a team member. The home care nurse, using rehabilitation expertise, develops an individualized program for the client and the client's family or caregiver.

The rehabilitation nurse in the home setting provides client-driven care as part of a continuum between other healthcare settings and the client’s home. The goals are to safely implement the client's self-management skills in the home setting and to restore the client's relationships with family members and others in the community.

The Association of Rehabilitation Nurses believes that the role of the rehabilitation nurse in the home care setting is an essential one in the continuum of care. The value of the rehabilitation nurse can be demonstrated by improved cost-effectiveness of client care, specialized rehabilitation nursing clinical knowledge and skill, reduction in the frequency of complications and re-hospitalizations experienced by rehabilitation clients, increased quality of nursing care, and reduced costs because of the presence of a resident expert to provide consultation services.

Rehabilitation nursing in home care is highly specialized; however, rehabilitation nurses in this setting serve a diverse population. Infants, children, adolescents, young adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults with disabling conditions may receive specialized home care nursing support from rehabilitation nurses in settings that include alternative living situations and their own home. Rehabilitation nurses may also serve in a case management role after transition to community is completed.

**TRENDS REHABILITATION NURSING CARE:**

1. [Immersive Technologies](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#it)
2. [Telehealth](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#tr)
3. [Rehabilitation Wearables](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#rw)
4. [Rehabilitation Robotics](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#rr)
5. [Personalized Pre-rehab Diagnostics](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#ppd)
6. [Photo- and Electro-Therapy](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#pet)
7. [Artificial Intelligence](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#ai)
8. [Neurofeedback](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#nf)
9. [Lightweight Technology](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#lt)
10. [Big Data & Analytics](https://www.startus-insights.com/innovators-guide/rehabilitation-technology-trends/#bda)
11. **Immersive Technologies**

The field of immersive technologies is expanding every year, especially in healthcare. Professionals and patients alike seek solutions that make therapies more engaging. And so, startups provide solutions in virtual and augmented realities (VR/AR) through software and hardware tools, tailored to each therapy. For example, AR/VR therapies include climbing games for people undergoing upper-limb rehabilitation. Moreover, engaging in a virtual space with virtual coaches allow patients to immerse themselves in a therapy session more easily. By breaking the initial barriers to entry, immersive tech is now the most prominent trend in rehabilitation technologies.

* 1. **Dynamics VR designs Specifically Rehabilitation Environments**

Spanish startup [DYNAMICS-VR](https://www.dynamics-vr.com/) makes physiotherapy accessible by developing special environments for rehabilitation patients and professionals. Their software solution is used with commercially accessible VR sets. This provides their clients with affordable, easy-to-use, and complete technology for successful rehabilitation. The startup’s solution aims to reduce kinesiophobia and pain by 37% and 60%, respectively. The solution also extends the rehabilitation sessions, making them more effective for patients in the long run.

* 1. **Improfit gamifies Rehabilitation**

Spanish startup [Improfit](https://www.improfit.ai/#technology) uses AR to make rehabilitation more interactive and enjoyable. By using its AR program and computer vision technology Improfit gamifies rehabilitation exercises. The program is also capable of providing feedback to each patient by identifying the action and evaluating it in real time. Further, Improfit helps in correcting posture and motion while also tracking the repetitions so as to make physiotherapy a pleasant experience.

1. **Telehealth (Telerehabilitation)**

The demand for remote therapy drastically increased during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for regular patients and non-urgent complications. This also forced physiotherapy providers to transform their offerings into remote services. Online consultations with physiotherapists about a patient’s physiological health status and remote movement therapies assist in the management of disabilities. In addition, telehealth services such as remote physical exercises, telediagnosis, and tele pharmacy also see rising demand and interest from both therapists and patients.

**2.1. Phyt. Health develops Online Physiotherapy Software**

Indian startup [Phyt](https://www.phyt.health/). creates a platform and an app that makes online physiotherapy more convenient for patients. Its solution focuses on at-home rehabilitation, but also at small exercises in office settings. The approach is divided into four stages, which every patient goes through, namely, pain management and protection, stabilization, strengthening, and ongoing prevention. During each stage and session, artificial intelligence algorithms remotely guide patients to achieve planned results efficiently.

**2.2. Telewecure facilitates eRehabilitation and Networking**

Iranian startup [Telewecure](http://telewecure.com/) provides clients with telerehabilitation services as well as a dedicated social networking platform. Telewecure’s remote rehabilitation solution allows patients to easily connect with physiotherapy providers via their platform, perform exercises, and receive equipment suggestions. Moreover, they make rehabilitation a more pleasant experience by offering a network that provides an online social media site for patients and professionals. This enables free communication and exchange of experiences in groups and forums that are featured in the Telewecure network.

1. **Rehabilitation Wearables**

The application of health monitoring wearables and devices in rehabilitation has proven to be an important element in enabling virtual therapies and consultations. Wearables provide greater flexibility in collecting and analyzing patient data that is later utilized by rehabilitation platforms and professionals. Further, the integration of wearables with mobile technologies has led to the growth of downloadable smartphone and tablet applications that provide real time guidance through rehabilitation exercises and plans.

* 1. **Smart MS3 manufactures EMG Wearable Sensors**

US-based startup [Smart MS3](https://www.smartms3.com/how-it-works-1) manufactures wearable electromyography (EMG) sensors that track patient status at any given time. The wearable EMG and musculoskeletal (MSK) sensors provide precise insights into muscle activation patterns. These sensors are wireless and are fitted to track any muscle group on a patient’s body. Currently, Smart MS3 offers applications for knee, lower back, and shoulder rehabilitation.

**3.2. DENTON creates 3D Movement Tracking**

UK-based startup [DENTON](https://www.dentonrpa.com/) utilizes wearable 3D tracking devices to monitor patients’ exact movement details. The 3D sensors are easily attachable by using straps on main body parts such as limbs, torso, and head. The remote connection between the sensors and their app provides analytical insights into a patient’s adherence levels, range of movement, exercise form, and pain intensity throughout the duration of their rehab program.

1. **Rehabilitation Robotics**

Robotics facilitate numerous solutions for rehabilitation patients. In particular, using robots helps in movement regeneration and faster advancements in rehabilitation plans. For example, robotic exoskeletons enable patients to move on their own, performing daily tasks without pain, while also enabling neural connection rebuilding. Startups are developing lightweight wearable robots to make physical disability less of a burden for people in need of support.

* 1. **Nureab develops Exoskeleton Hands**

Egypt-based startup [Nureab](https://nureab.net/products/rehandelaton/) creates exoskeleton hands to make rehabilitation and movement easier for patients. Their product is composed of five mechanical fingers with a full range of motion. The device provides active, passive, and resistance rehabilitation programs. In particular, physiotherapists are using resistance to treat conditions such as quadriplegic, hemiplegia, tendonitis, fractures, and injuries. The device’s motion tracking is very accurate to 1 degree. In addition, Nureab’s solution is lightweight, fittable for different hand sizes, and easy to use.

**4.2 Fleming MedLab develops Soft Robots**

Chinese startup [Fleming MedLab](https://flemingmedlab.com/) targets the current problem of high costs and the difficult operability of conventional rehabilitation robotics with its novel soft robots. The robotic solution is implemented in wearables such as suits or clothing. This allows practitioners to focus on patients and not on operating the device, as well as facilitates use at home. Fleming MedLab is focusing on neuroplasticity in their soft robotic solution to accelerate the active recovery of patients. One of the applications of this technology involves patients suffering strokes or heart attacks.

1. **Personalized Pre-rehab Diagnostics**

To set a successful rehabilitation plan, the diagnostics of the current health state of the patient need to be performed. In examinations like gait analysis or brain tests, movement and neural connections are usually analyzed. For this purpose, startups specialize in utilizing novel technologies such as sensor-fitted shoe pads and AI-powered CT scanning, among others. These solutions provide accurate real-time measuring and assessment for the needs of individual diagnostics. The solutions also pave the way for highly personalized diagnostics which, in turn, improve patient recovery and outcomes.

* 1. **LAAF develops Active Testing for Gait**

US-based startup [LAAF](https://laaftogether.com/product-smart-insoles/) develops a solution for personalized gait testing and root cause analysis of pain. The startup develops smart shoe pads that measure a variety of aspects such as heel strike force, step clearance, pronation, cadence, and foot progression. As a result of the analysis of measured data, LAAF uses its app to produce patient insights and helps them improve their performance and technique.

* 1. **Voxel AI advances Multimodal Imaging**

Canadian startup [Voxel AI](https://www.voxel.ai/) assesses brain structure, function, and physiology in patients with neurological injury or disease to guide patient therapy. It achieves this with the use of advanced neural analysis and multimodal imaging. Voxel provides greater insight into the health of patients’ brains with highly personalized, factoring in the small modalities of the brain that differentiate the outcome and required therapy. The solution enables the accurate analysis of brain injuries to make patient recovery easier and faster.

1. **Photo- and Electro-Therapy**

Light and electric therapy has been utilized in rehabilitation treatment for a long time, but recent advancements in technology enable this therapy to be more affordable and convenient for those in need. Electric and light therapies help in muscle regeneration and blood flow stimulation. For example, startups utilize red light and electrode-fitted suites to streamline recovery and strengthen muscles and reduce the time required for rehabilitation.

* 1. **NEURO20 creates Suits for Muscle Recovery**

US-based startup [NEURO20](https://neuro20.com/technology.php) creates a suit equipped with electrodes that enhances the muscle force of the patient. NEURO 20 advances electrotherapy by equipping patients with form-fitting Lycra suits. These suits provide electrical muscle stimulation and gather information using biosensors. This data is then available through a remote platform. In particular, twenty stimulating electrodes are embedded into the suit, located over large muscles covering motor points and creating involuntary contractions. This brings pain relief and boosts muscle recovery for users.

* 1. **LUMINOSRED advances Red Light Therapy**

Austrian startup [LUMINOSRED](https://luminousred.com/product/) develops novel solutions for rehabilitation using red light. During the manufacturing of its specialized treatment lamp, LUMINOSRED developed an FDA-approved method, with low-EMF and anti-flicker technology. This therapy enables streamlined blood flow and supports the regeneration of muscles. It specifically develops lamps for at-home care at high intensity (100w/cm²) and different wavelengths (660nm + 850nm).

1. **Artificial Intelligence**

Patients that reside in the care of rehabilitation experts generally benefit from the implementation of AI in rehabilitation. In recent years, the uptake of startups working on computer vision and machine learning solutions has risen exponentially. AI is now able to provide real-time and valuable insights to improve the exercise’s performance quality and future physiatric plan development. AI-powered platforms offer personalized & remote monitoring, as well as offer suggestions for further improvement. Machine learning-powered devices further support patients at every step during rehabilitation procedures.

* 1. **Breathment enables AI-based Remote Patient Management**

German startup [Breathment](https://breathment.com/professionals) builds an AI-powered program to assist professionals in tracking the performance of their patients remotely. This is customizable for every rehabilitation expert, by implementing any of their own exercises. Breathment develops a way to make any exercise plan remote, personalized, and with data-driven feedback for patients.

* 1. **Rootally develops AI-driven Rehabilitation Solutions**

Singaporean startup [Rootally](https://rootally.com/) is making home rehabilitation more convenient and inexpensive. Its product, AllyCare, is an AI-powered solution utilizing mobile devices for therapy. By showing an AI-generated model of any exercise and simultaneous tracking of the patient’s movement, therapy becomes easily accessible. Tracking and analysis of rehabilitation sessions provide insights into patients’ progression. The solution does not need any sensors attached to the patient’s body which makes AllyCaremore user-friendly.

1. **Neurofeedback**

Neurofeedback is one of the emerging trends in the rehabilitation industry. The human brain is working on electrical signals which are being analyzed by emerging startups to make rehabilitation easier and non-invasive. In particular, it includes using wearable sensors and electro-stimulation devices for patients after stroke, concussion rehabilitation, or pain management. Such solutions also hold the potential for improving the brain and neural performance of people suffering from long-term neurological disorders.

* 1. **Divergence Neuro creates Remote Neurofeedback Solutions**

Canadian startup [Divergence Neuro](https://www.divergenceneuro.com/) brings neurofeedback to online therapy. Its solution provides real time neurofeedback of patients’ brain functions and pain levels. The wearable headset device fits any user and works in combination with the startup’s platform and mobile app. The platform serves therapists in designing treatment sessions that include a variety of quantitative and qualitative assessments in line with predefined or custom treatment protocols. The mobile app allows patients to access the treatment programs that professionals assigned to them. Besides, it guides patients through the neurofeedback or neuro-meditation protocols therapists have asked them to complete.

* 1. **Exsurgo develops a Neurostimulation Headset**

New Zealand-based startup [Exsurgo](https://exsurgo.com/about/) develops a novel wearable device for pain and rehabilitation management. The AXON is a product that tracks brain activity data by using electroencephalography (EEG) and AI, as well as displaying information on a user’s mobile device. With real-time visual feedback, the user learns to modulate the pain by recognizing it and modifying their response, resulting in a significant decrease in pain levels. AXON empowers patients to proceed with their treatment from the comfort of their homes.

1. **Lightweighting/Unweighting Technology**

During the convalescence period, therapy requires a gradual introduction of body weight to the limbs during exercise to become effective. To unweight the body, a couple of technologies are being used such as water, vacuum, and supporting devices that redirect the forces to non-damaged body parts. This way, startups are creating vacuum treadmills that lower the pressure on anterior limbs or utilizing walkers as a supportive measure during rehabilitation.

* 1. **MEBSTER builds a Lightweight Passive Exoskeleton**

Czechia-based startup [MEBSTER](https://mebster.com/) develops an unweighting device for lower limbs. The startup’s UNILEXA is a non-robotic exoskeleton equipped with multiple sensors. This device helps patients reduce the stress on their lower limbs and help them move easier. The startup aims to build affordable and useful home assistive devices that enable people to walk again. UNILEXA is already being used in healthcare centers to track patient conditions and rehabilitation progress.

* 1. **Boost Treadmills develops Microgravity Treadmills**

US-based startup [Boost Treadmills](https://boosttreadmills.com/) provides a vacuum-powered unweighting treadmill to support lower limb recovery. Boost 1 provides an adjustable amount of force that has to be borne by the patient’s legs and lower back, which highly influences the rehabilitation time and endured pain. Boost’s solution creates a vacuum chamber, therefore reducing gravitational force which is a practical way to support the experience of physiotherapy. It is currently developing Boost 2, which simplifies controls, gait analysis, and pre-programmed workout management.

1. **Big Data & Analytics**

Medical and physiotherapy data holds the potential to impact various decisions throughout a patient’s lifetime. Big data, gathered with the help of machine learning algorithms, inform experts of patient progress through various procedures, over time and under differing conditions. The information extracted from this data pack is also used to drive precision medicine and the sale of therapy-assistive devices such as exoskeletons and crutches. Startups in this field tackle the challenge of big data management by offering innovative health platforms to make data more accessible while also ensuring security.

**ROLES OF THE REHABILITATION NURSE**

The roles of the rehabilitation nurse include, but are not limited to, those outlined below.

**Practitioner**

* Serves as a clinical resource for those involved in rehabilitation nursing practice.
* Serves as a clinical resource in the care of clients with a complex chronic illness, and disabling conditions.
* Acts as a resource during a crisis that is aggravated by a chronic illness or a disabling condition.
* Assesses the appropriateness of a client's admission to, and the delivery of rehabilitation services in, the home environment.
* Provides assistance with discharge planning to ensure a smooth transition into the community or, when appropriate, to help clients who are hiring private attendants.
* Collaborates with the interdisciplinary team in the management of the team function in the home environment; is responsible for ensuring that the client is involved as a significant member of the team.
* Helps the client, the client's family and caregivers safely adapt to changes in lifestyle necessitated by the disabling condition.
* Implements rehabilitation nursing care based on scientific knowledge, home care standards, and rehabilitation principles that are safe and appropriate to the home care environment

**Care coordinator**

* Acts as a member of the interdisciplinary healthcare team and promotes the coordination of client care.
* Coordinates the activities of rehabilitation professionals; integrates the knowledge and skills of various rehabilitation disciplines into a comprehensive continuum of care.
* Facilitates the design and implementation of the plan of care for clients who are chronically ill or who have disabling conditions.

**Advocate**

Advocates for clients, their families and caregivers.

* Teaches clients and their families or caregivers to advocate for themselves.
* Facilitates the client’s transition from the hospital to the home and the community.
* Furthers an understanding of home care-based rehabilitation issues among people in the community and among those in government who are in a position to deal with issues related to this patient population.
* Supports clients and their families with end-of-life decisions.

**Educator**

* Provides education for clients, their families and other caregivers.
* Provides staff orientation and guides staff development, both at the professional and the paraprofessional levels, in the area of rehabilitation home care.
* Provides education and training for the client, family and caregivers on safe use of new and existing adaptive equipment.
* Provides rehabilitation-focused continuing education programs.
* Develops policies and procedures that are specific to rehabilitation home care.
* Develops educational materials designed to help clients and their family members and other caregivers become knowledgeable consumers in the healthcare arena.

**Consultant**

* Identifies clients and families who could benefit from rehabilitation home care services.
* Provides case management expertise within the home care environment.
* Serves as a liaison with third-party payers and justifies the use of funds for rehabilitation home care services.
* Serves as a resource for home care nurses and as a process consultant to all staff in the home care setting.
* Promotes rehabilitation nursing services to community health professionals and to the community at large.

**Researcher**

* Participates in research involving home care clients and their families**.**
* Participates in the analysis and dissemination of evaluative data that may have an impact on clients, their families and other caregivers**.**
* Incorporates evaluative data into nursing practice**.**

**FUNCTIONS OF THE REHABILITATION NURSE**

The rehabilitation nurse uses the principles of rehabilitation nursing as defined within the established scope of rehabilitation nursing practice and standards developed by the Association of Rehabilitation Nurses and the American Nurses Association. The functions of the rehabilitation nurse can be divided into several categories, which are outlined below.

**Assessment**

* Reviews and analyzes referral information in consultation with the client, as well as with the client’s rehabilitation team members, employers, the family’s legal representative, and claims or insurance personnel, as appropriate**.**
* Assesses the client’s current personal and functional health status, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment plan, as well as the caregiver’s level of expertise**.**
* Assesses the home environment for potential safety concerns for the client and caregivers**.**
* Identifies the client’s learning needs, vocational rehabilitation requirements, and potential related to his or her functional impairment, medical diagnosis and prognosis, treatment providers, treatment options, financial resources, psychosocial adjustment, and coping mechanisms**.**
* Identifies needs for adaptive equipment to maintain client and caregiver safety**.**

**Data analysis and formulation of a nursing diagnosis**

* Identifies temporary or permanent alterations in function that have resulted from the client’s injury or illness**.**
* Identifies potential challenges or complications in the client’s physiological and/or psychosocial functioning that may have an impact on the client’s successful functioning in the home or community**.**
* Identifies potential difficulties that the client may have in being reintegrated into the community**.**
* Identifies the learning needs of the client, the client’s family and other caregivers related to successful reintegration into the home or the community

**Establishment of goals and plan of care**

* Works with the client to establish realistic goals for achieving optimal outcomes by collaborating with the client and the client’s family and by using available resources.
* Helps the client, the client’s family and other caregivers identify the variables that can influence the achievement of goals.
* Develops a comprehensive plan that includes treatment measures to prevent disability; identifies alternatives for the client’s treatments, when appropriate.
* Establishes target dates for achieving goals.
* Integrates rehabilitation goals consistent with the realities of the client’s family system and home environment

**Implementation**

* Facilitates and collaborates with the healthcare team and the client for timely discharge planning from the hospital to an alternative level of care, when appropriate**.**
* Coordinates the discharge plan with the client, the healthcare team, and the client’s care providers.
* Uses rehabilitation principles to promote optimal outcomes for the client**.**
* Provides ongoing assessment of the client, the family, and other caregivers**.**
* Coordinates access to accelerated care options, alternative care options, or both, when appropriate**.**
* Coordinates the client’s access to appropriate government and community programs and resources**.**
* Coordinates and evaluates in a quality-conscious, cost-effective and safe manner the client’s, the family’s and the caregiver’s use of medical equipment, supplies, medications and available services**.**
* Provides instruction, based on identified learning needs, to the client, the client’s family and other caregivers**.**
* Coordinates referrals for instruction or counselling that are agreeable to the client, the client’s family and other caregivers that are based on identified learning needs**.**
* Intervenes promptly, when necessary, to promote optimal functioning and to prevent complications

**Collaboration**

* Collaborates with the healthcare team, payers, community agencies, providers, and legal representatives to ensure the client’s care throughout the healthcare continuum**.**
* Promotes effective communication between the client, the client’s family, and payers**.**
* Participates in team meetings, when appropriate**.**
* Incorporates the interdisciplinary team’s recommendations and services into the plan of care.

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