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1 December, 2017

Hydrotherapy the ticket to mobility for Kerri

For Kerri Thorne, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital's hydrotherapy pool has been a ticket to mobility.

The 52-year-old from Glebe developed severe rheumatoid arthritis at the age of seven, and has undergone multiple joint surgeries, including fusions and joint replacements.

She's one of many patients who find land-based activities difficult due to joint instability, pain and weakness.



At RPA, we also hydrotherapy, where patients exercise in a heated pool with physiotherapists, to provide people like Kerri with a weightless environment to improve muscle strength, reduce pain, lose weight, improve function and reduce disability.

Hydrotherapy is also used to help obese patients lose weight as it reduces the need for joint replacement surgery, and for those still requiring surgery, weight loss can lower surgical risk through improved cardiovascular function and result in shorter hospital admissions.

Unlike other community pools, the RPA hydrotherapy pool has specialised equipment, staffing and emergency protocols in place to allow our most disabled patients to safely access and undertake hydrotherapy.

“Accessibility is different for everyone because we all have varying needs, but I spent months trying to find a community pool that I could use and none of them worked for me,” says Kerri. “Some didn’t have the right equipment to help me into the water and some pool managers told me I was not welcome to join their classes as I was deemed a health risk.”

Now, a few months into weekly sessions with a physiotherapist at the RPA pool, she is already experiencing improvements in her strength and balance.

“My musculoskeletal system is very weak and I get injured very easily, but I can move much better in water and already I’m more steady standing and a lot less stiff.”

Work is also starting soon on a new wheelchair accessible shower and toilet for people using the pool and an upgrade of the existing showers and toilets.