

Recovery for Covid-19 patients

“Post-Covid 19 patients have the most trouble”

Resident Stefanie Petzold had probably imagined her long-planned return to the Kliniken Valens in April 2020 differently. The first wave of the coronavirus pandemic was in full swing at the time. “I first had to prove to the Swiss authorities that I had an important reason for entering the country,” reports the native German, who had already gained professional experience at the Walenstadtberg site of the clinic in 2017 and 2018. The physician looks back: “At the beginning of April 2020, the first patients were assigned to the Rehazentrum Walenstadtberg for rehabilitation after surviving Covid-19 disease. From mid-April 2020, acutely infected patients were also admitted to a newly established isolation ward to relieve the hospitals.”



Stand-up training in rehabilitation. Photo credit: Kliniken Valens

The new situation unexpectedly provided Petzold with the topic for her doctoral thesis, which she plans to complete by the end of 2021. “I am particularly interested in pulmonary diseases. That’s why I was immediately convinced when Professor Stefan Bachmann, Medical Director of General Internal Medicine at the Valens Clinics, suggested I investigate how the health of Covid-19 patients changes during rehabilitation in Walenstadtberg,” Petzold says. “To do this, I analyzed the data of about 100 patients who were undergoing treatment at the Walenstadtberg Rehabilitation Center between the beginning of April and the end of June 2020. Their age range was from about forty to ninety years.”

“I compared three groups: The patients in the isolation ward who were acutely ill with coronavirus formed the first group. The second group comprised the post-Covid 19 patients, i.e. those people who were recovering in our rehabilitation center after having overcome their coronavirus illness. The control group consisted of patients who stayed in Walenstadtberg at the same time without ever having contracted coronavirus. The three groups were comparable with regard to age, sex and previous illnesses. The rehabilitation program, consisting of physiotherapy, ergometer training, walking exercises and respiratory therapy, was similar for all groups. The average length of stay ranged from 21 to 25 days.”

Petzold reflects, “I assumed that the acutely ill would have the most difficulties. But in fact, that was not the case. The post-Covid 19 patients rated their quality of life, subjectively perceived physical and mental health, and mobility the worst at the start of the treatment. At the end of the stay in Walenstadtberg, all patients improved and there were no longer any major differences between the groups. Individual cases will stay in my memory. For example, we were able to discharge an elderly patient acutely ill with coronavirus, who was too weak to sit when he was

admitted, after two months without a rollator, catheter, tube and oxygen. You can't imagine how happy the patient was about that!"

Authors: Stefanie Petzold & Daniela Heinen

Kliniken Valens

The Kliniken Valens specialize in the rehabilitation of patients with functional impairments of the musculoskeletal system and nervous system, cardiovascular diseases, internal oncological, pneumological as well as psychological and psychosomatic illnesses. www.kliniken-valens.ch

The content of this article was provided by Academia Raetica, the association of scientifically active institutions in Graubünden: www.academia-raetica.ch.



Stefanie Petzold

German version published in Bündner Woche on May 12, 2021.

May 12, 2021/DH