

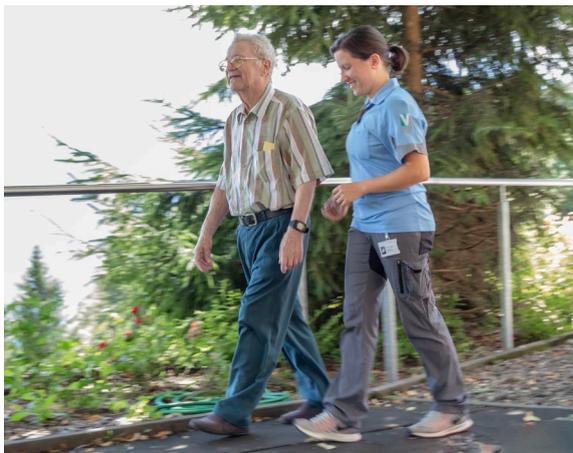
English translation of our article in the «Bündner Woche», October 30, 2019, p. 49

Research in the region

Rehabilitation for patients with cancer

At the Walenstadtberg rehabilitation center, cancer patients regain strength

Around 40'000 new cases of cancer occur every year in Switzerland. Cancer rehabilitation is aimed at alleviating illness-related symptoms such as fatigue, exhaustion and pain. The Walenstadtberg Rehabilitation Center is a member of SWISS REHA, the association of leading Swiss rehabilitation clinics. The extensive range of therapies offered is based on the association's quality and performance criteria and is individually tailored to each patient. A central goal of in-patient treatment is that patients regain their independence in everyday life and feel comfortable in their bodies again. A team of experts consisting of doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, ergo-therapists, sports and movement therapists, nutritionists, speech therapists, masseuses, psychologists and pastors is there to care for the patients during their stay as needed.



The rehabilitation program comprises a wide range of measures. Exercise and physiotherapy strengthen independence in everyday life. Picture: Kliniken Valens

Inspired by her many years of practical experience at the Walenstadtberg Rehabilitation Center, physiotherapist Carmen Thanei examined the effectiveness of rehabilitation in cancer patients more closely in her master's thesis: "At the beginning and end of inpatient rehabilitation, we measure the progress of treatment with various tests based on objectively measured values (e.g. walking test) and on the patients' self-assessment. For me, the question was whether we are using the right tests and whether they should be supplemented or replaced. With regard to the health of the patients, I was particularly interested in how much their mobility and everyday activity change during the rehabilitation stay. How does the mobility at the end of rehabilitation affect fatigue and daily activity three months later?"

For her master thesis, the physiotherapist conducted a pilot study with 35 cancer patients including 19 women and 16 men between 43 and 87 years of age during the period from June to September 2018. The average age was 71 years. Their stay in the rehabilitation center averaged three weeks. At the beginning and end of the in-patient treatment, Thanei asked the patients how they assessed their physical and mental health, social activity, exercise of social roles, emotional problems, fatigue and pain. In addition, patients underwent a three-meter walking test and two and six-minute walking tests. Three months after completion of in-patient rehabilitation, patients replied again to the questionnaires.

It was found that the questionnaires chosen by Thanei were well suited to reflect the patients' state of health. She also confirmed an important assumption: "The more active and mobile the patients were at the end of inpatient rehabilitation, the less fatigue they experienced and the better their overall well-being three months later." To support her preliminary findings, Thanei is now expanding her study to 165 patients.

The Expert



Carmen Thanei comes from Mals in the Vinschgau/Italy. Since 2016, the South Tyrolean has enthusiastically been managing the physiotherapy department of the Valens Clinics at the Walenstadtberg/canton Sankt Gallen site. In August 2019, the physiotherapist also completed a part-time Master's degree in Advanced Physio Therapy and Management at the Physiozentrum Wien and the FH Burgenland in Austria. In her free time she enjoys barbecues, playing badminton and exploring her new home country Switzerland. Please direct your questions on this topic to the expert at info@graduateschool.ch by November 6.

Carmen Thanei

Find out more about research in Graubünden: www.academiaaetica.ch, www.graduateschool.ch.

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