

# Improving Patient's Quality of Life through Nurse-Led Combined Rehabilitation Program

Omaimah Qadhi  
Ph.D. candidate, MSN, RN

## Background

- The number of critical illness survivors continues to increase.
- Survival rate for one to three years after discharge reaches 89%.
- Long term survival rate following the first 3 years for the critical illness survivors is less than other patient populations..
- staying in the Intensive Care Unit lead to various complications.
- ranges from curable simple to serious permanent disabilities.
- These complications may impact the patient's subjective quality of life (QoL).
- Nurse-led program involves ICU nurses in the treatment plan for the survivors
- Nurse-led intervention can shorten the hospitalization period as well as reducing the cost of care.
- ICU nurses are available weekdays and weekends..
- Occupational and physical therapist usually don't work on weekends.

## Objectives

- explore the importance and effectiveness of nurse-led combined rehabilitation in the intensive unit.
- Understand how critical illness can impact the survivor's overall quality of life.

## Combined Rehabilitation

The combined cognitive and physical rehabilitation intervention found feasible to be used with the ICU patients.

## Rehabilitation



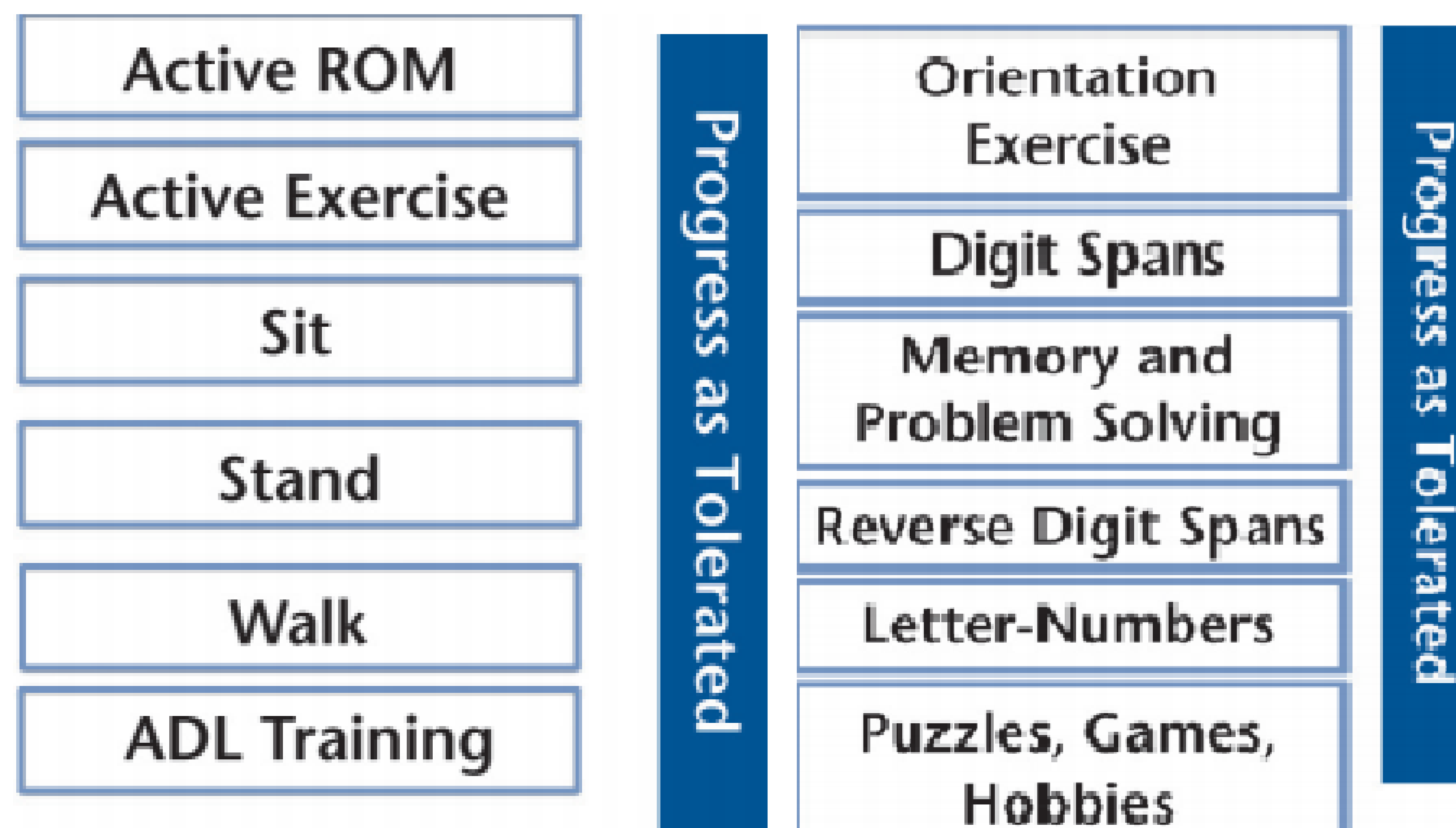
## Expected Outcomes

- Faster recovery
- Better outcomes
- Possible better reported quality of life for the survivors.
- Reduced cost due to shorten stay in the hospital.
- Better collaboration between healthcare professional including nurses, physical therapists and occupational therapists.

## Challenges

- The diversity in diagnosis, care plan, prognosis among the ICU patient's population.
- Health status is commonly unstable with this particular people.
- This intervention depends on patient's readiness and willingness to cooperate with the nurses.

## Physical/Cognitive Rehabilitation



Brummel, A. E., Jackson, J. C., Girard, T. D., Pandharipande, P. P., Schiro, E., Pun, B. T., Wesley Ely, E. (2012). A combined early cognitive and physical rehabilitation program for people who are critically ill: The activity and cognitive therapy in the intensive care unit (ACT-ICU). Physical Therapy, 92, 1580-1592.

## ICU patients get better faster with early rehab

TTSH finds patients who start on physiotherapy leave ICU earlier

By KASH CHEONG

YOU would think that the last thing patients in intensive care need is exercise. And while this is true in some cases, a team from Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) has found that starting suitable patients on simple exercises can help them get out of the intensive care unit (ICU) earlier.

The average length of stay for such patients at its surgical intensive care unit (SICU) fell from three days to two after staff started them on physiotherapy as soon as possible. Patients also had higher potential for rehabilitation to regain mobility.

"Patients in ICU may be frail

but helping them to move early ensures that they do not waste away in bed," he added.

More tests need to be done to ascertain the findings as the study involved only 75 patients, said Mr Balachandran. But the results are similar to studies in the United States, he added.

Most of the hospital's SICU patients who can benefit from early physiotherapy now start as soon as medically possible. But it was not always this way.

"When we started in 2012, it was hard to get buy-in as doctors and nurses were not used to the concept," said Mr Balachandran.

"But we showed them medical literature proving that it has worked elsewhere. Some nurses also pushed for it as they saw how it helped patients."

Nurses get a standard checklist to help them start the physio process. They need only to tick off the checklist and ensure the patient is conscious, has a constant



STAYING MOBILE

The traditional impression of ICU patients is of them lying in bed to recuperate. But for each day he lies in bed, he loses 2 per cent of his muscles. Patients in ICU may be frail but helping them to move early ensures that they do not waste away in bed.

— TTSH principal physiotherapist Jayachandran Balachandran.

LET'S GET GOING

I like exercise, at least I am not drowsy and sleeping all the time. I can't wait to go home and cook dahl and roti.

— Madam Santokh Kaur, an ICU patient at TTSH

Madam Santokh Kaur going through some gentle exercises with the help of physiotherapist Prameen Fox at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. PHOTO: LIM YASHRA FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

patients," she said. Family members also fear that their frail loved ones are overworked.

But doctors say that if done right, patients benefit. TTSH patient Santokh Kaur, 77, raised her arms and walked a few steps during a recent rehab session in the ICU. "I like exercise, at least I am not drowsy and sleeping all the time... I can't wait to go home and cook dahl and roti," she said, flashing a smile.

## Implications

- Research studies are need focusing on how nurses can help in rehabilitation intervention to improve patient's outcomes.
- Due to the diversity in the ICU, creating a unified combined rehabilitation program is impossible. However introducing a most applicable intervention to the majority of this population will be greatly appreciated.
- Studies addressing subjective quality of life are in demand because it is always overlooked and health care professionals mistakenly use objective approach in evaluating survivor's quality of life.