

Personal Touches, Personal Care

The staff of Select Specialty Hospital of Fort Wayne caters care to patient needs.

article by Lauren Caggiano • photo provided by Select Specialty Hospital

John Bower credits his recovery from multiple traumatic ailments to the quality care he received while he was a patient at Select Specialty Hospital of Fort Wayne. Bower, a New Haven resident, suffered from a series of medical complications before coming to Select for rehabilitative care. A dedicated volunteer at his church, he was working there one day in October 2007 when he started experiencing symptoms of a heart attack. He was admitted to a local hospital where he underwent bypass surgery. During the months following the bypass surgery, he was in and out of the hospital.

A gallbladder removal was next on the list for Bower. After his operation, he left the hospital with more than he had bargained for: a case of MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus). The infection was caused by Staphylococcus aureus bacteria, which is often referred to as staph, and it is resistant to the broad-spectrum antibiotics commonly used to treat it. MRSA can be fatal, especially to older people, so in Bower's case it was cause for worry. The

"When I got to Select, I could hardly raise my arms and legs," Bower says.

He says the future looked bleak, but he somehow managed to keep the faith and bounce back. After a three-month stay filled with rest and rehabilitation, he was nearly back to his old self. When he looks back at his stay, the caring and helpful nature of the Select staff is what comes to mind. There were times when he thought he wouldn't make it, but the kindness of the staff is what kept him going.

In particular, Select employees Grace, Jolyn and Connie were the three angels who helped with Bower's rehabilitation. Through their aid and the use of a hydraulic walker, he regained the strength to walk.

Eating, let alone swallowing, was also an issue in Bower's weakened state. His epiglottis, the flap-like structure at the root of the tongue that keeps food and liquid out of the airway, no longer worked. Even water was difficult to swallow. His speech therapist, Mary, worked with him to overcome this issue. Bower says she was patient and made him feel at ease. She filmed him swallowing while eating to make sure everything was functioning properly. His delicate system required him to eat ground meats, soft foods and thickened liquids only. Another Select employee, Rhonda, catered to his special dietary needs by making sure he was well nourished.

Despite the intensive care, Bower still faced complications from the tracheostomy. Case in point, there was a time when he was unable to speak. Consequently, the staff had to adapt to this challenge by reading his lips. And when a nurse couldn't understand him, they were quick to bring in someone else to give it a try. Eventually, he was able to use his voice with the aid of a Passy-Muir speaking valve.

Another aspect of the care at Select that Bower appreciated is that the therapists came to his room, as opposed to moving him to another part of the hospital for therapy. This setting made for a more private and less stressful experience. In a larger hospital, it's not unusual for a patient to be transported to another area for therapy. However, in a smaller facility like Select, the staff can better cater to the patient's needs.

The nursing staff was conducive to a pleasant hospital experience, as well. Bower says they went above and beyond to help him, whether it was positioning pillows, bringing him water or offering words of encouragement. And whenever he pushed

the service button, a nurse almost always responded in a timely manner.

"These are personal touches you don't often find at other hospitals," Bower notes. "All of the nurses at Select were good to me and helpful. I thought it was nice that they did these extra things."

The doctors at Select are trained to handle acute illness, multiple injuries, trauma or medical complications. Bower says Dr. Chung-Seng Lee was especially attentive to his individual needs. When an ulcer further complicated matters, Lee was at his bedside ensuring his welfare. Bower says the ulcer was likely caused by the high dosage of medication, which Lee took into account.

Under Lee's direction, the staff performed blood tests, x-rays and other tests to monitor his progress. The test results can be hard to understand for a non-clinical person, but Lee was there to patiently explain the results. Bower says he felt confident in the knowledge he received and knew he was in good hands.

Nearly four months later, Bower was discharged from the hospital. There were so many setbacks and his health fluctuated, but "[the staff] didn't give up on me," he says.

After he was allowed to return home, there were still some loose ends to tie up. At Select, each patient is assigned a case manager to guide their case from admission through discharge, which can often be an overwhelming process. Among the many duties, the case manager is available to answer questions, assist with insurance and to plan a safe, timely and appropriate discharge. Bower's case manager, Kay, was there to help him navigate the process.

Following discharge, Bower was sent home with several medications and strict instructions. He says the staff was available by phone to answer questions and provide any needed details. They also followed up on his appointments. Today Bower has returned to normal his life with his wife, Carol. He enjoys spending time with his 12 grandchildren, playing golf and riding his motorcycle. •



John Bower, former Select Specialty Hospital patient

infection weakened his immune system and prompted more urgent care and procedures, including a tracheostomy.

Bower was in bad shape when he was admitted to Select Specialty Hospital on January 5, 2009. As he explains, the staff at Select was charged with a lofty challenge: weaning him off the ventilator and nursing him back to good health.

Select Specialty Hospital, which is located on the 7th and 8th floors of St. Joseph Hospital, touts its spectrum of specialized care. Unlike a large facility, it offers a more individualized approach to care. Its typical patient requires more intensive, focused care for optimal recovery. Bower's health issues fell under the scope of the hospital's continuum of care, so he was admitted there to recover from his series of medical issues.

Select Specialty Hospital of Fort Wayne

Address: 700 Broadway
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802

Phone: (260) 425-3810

Web site: www.selectmedicalcorp.com

Number of Employees: 135

Specialties: Ventilator weaning, complex respiratory conditions and complex wound care.