

March 2010 Medical Report for Paula

It is now close to 9 months since Paula's accident. She continues to move forward and is working hard to get her life back. It has been a difficult road and I, along with the Friends of Paula group and many others from among her family and friends, have been consulting with experts in the field to ensure that her medicines and therapies are aiding her and not holding her back.

Paula continues to be followed by Dr. Bapineedu, a rehabilitation specialist from Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital. On the drive to Spaulding Paula was able to ask me in-depth questions about what the plans were for her recovery. I told her the plan is for her to be able to be safe using a walker on her own, not just in physical therapy. When she is getting close to this goal we will try to get her into Mentor ABI, a program which serves as a halfway house for people with severe brain injuries. The program was recommended most highly by everyone including the president of Spaulding. This program will not be covered by health insurance, so our fundraising efforts must continue.

Paula had a rocky start at Middleboro, partially due to a medication change and, we believe, her own realization that she wasn't getting home as quickly as she had hoped. She did, however, continue to make excellent physical progress and her doctor there has been willing to work with us and address our concerns. She is now able to stand steadily for some time with minimal support and transferring her to and from the wheelchair has been much easier with Paula able to do a good bit of the work. We have gotten her additional cognitive therapy; it is an additional expense to have her go twice a week (rather than once) but it helps her process her situation. This was recommended as one of the most important things we could provide her to complement her physical, occupational (fine motor/life skills) and speech therapies by both Dr. Bapineedu and the neurologist she visited in the end of February.

Paula is now able to scoot herself around in her wheelchair using her feet. This gives her the ability to move around on her own and talk to other patients and the nurses as she pleases. Her right hand had been stiff but they are now using heat therapy, which has helped. She is now able to eat in the main dining room with the higher-functioning patients, which gives her lots of practice using a fork and a place to socialize.

We have been talking to Paula about her next placement and making it clear to her that all the complications of life such as her project, her house and her finances are being handled by people she trusts. All she needs to focus on is improving physically and mentally, working on her memory and life skills and gaining more control of her impulsivity. They are evaluating her for speech therapy program of 5 times a week (now 3 times) which should be in effect within the next two weeks. She will continue to work on her writing skills in OT which helps strengthen her right hand as well. She will be getting bifocals within the next week which we hope will help her with reading as well.

We now have \$45,000 of the at least \$60,000 needed to pay for four months of treatment at Mentor ABI and will continue our fundraising efforts. The experts agree that this is Paula's best shot for the fullest recovery possible. As the neurologist told Paula there is no silver bullet to make her recovery faster; her brain and body need time to heal, and she needs to continue the hard work she is doing to regain her abilities and independence.

Jennifer Sea Booras – Conservator and Health Proxy
for Paula Persechini-Petitti