

Doctors of Movement

Carl Fairburn and Ryan Sharrett know the pain of injuries, the frustration of disability, and what it may mean to a person to fully recover. Sharrett and Fairburn – both physical therapists at Oroville Hospital – played football in high school, and each was injured. Sharrett tore his posterior cruciate ligament, and Fairburn separated his shoulder. Both athletes made full recoveries, then turned their greater energies toward finer studies of the human body. In fact, they were both studying anatomy and physiology at Chico State (a few years apart) when they made their decisions to become physical therapists.

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In the years following, they deepened their focus on anatomy and physiology, pharmacology, radiology, biomechanics and other related topics of medicine – including a compulsory 16-week course on the mechanics of simply walking. By the time Fairburn finally received his doctorate from the University of the Pacific and Sharrett his from the University of Southern California, each fully understood the human body, the ways in which it commonly becomes injured, and just what it needs to heal from injuries.

At Oroville Hospital's physical therapy department, patients must be diagnosed through observation and mechanical tests of the limbs – not always a straightforward process, as the body tends to transfer stresses and imbalanced loads to other limbs and

joints. The hip, for instance, may pay the price for poor form in other parts of the body.

“So, if a patient is having hip problems, we have to look at the big picture, study the whole body to see where the trouble with the hip is originating,” Sharrett explained. “Once we’ve done that, it’s our job to help change the way people move.”

Oroville Hospital's physical therapists work mostly with outpatients who come to the hospital with an injury or ongoing symptom, commonly an orthopedic issue. But they also play an important role in inpatient care by helping people recover who have been admitted to the hospital for long-term treatment, often with lung infections like pneumonia or sepsis.

“We get them out of bed and moving again,”

Fairburn says. “This opens up their chest and gets their cardio vascular system going, which helps with their recovery.”

But better than recovery is injury prevention, and the body responds positively to regular use and activity. Exercise keeps joints lubricated, bones strong, and muscles, tendons, and ligaments limber.

“Your body and your joints need to move, and it’s important to stay active,” Sharrett advises.



Oroville Hospital