

## **"Why use Aquatic Physiotherapy in the treatment of neurological patients."**

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In the past hydrotherapy or aquatic physiotherapy was the poor relation of “real” physiotherapy. Some thought it was not useful for neurological patients who actually require normal weight bearing or more sensory stimulation than is present in water with reduced gravity. I will use a case presentation to illustrate the progress of a young head injured patient and show how hydrotherapy can be used to achieve many of the goals we would work on with land rehabilitation, often more effectively, enjoyably and easily. When run efficiently hydrotherapy can be a cost efficient option. With a poor prognosis the initial goals of treatment were to see if this young man still enjoyed the water, to give his family hope that there would be something in life that he could still enjoy and some recreational activity that they might do with him. His initial response to treatment led to a fully integrated aquatic rehabilitation program. The rehabilitation goals of tone normalization, sensory integration, pain reduction, muscle elongation, improved stability, strength, function, fitness & co-ordination can be achieved in water. The clinical reasoning behind the use of shoes, splints, weights and modified swimming is discussed. Long term neurological patients often develop a musculoskeletal stiffness that hinders their functional recovery so aquatic manual therapy techniques can form part of their aquatic physiotherapy treatment. In conclusion we need to be mindful that when treating in a hydrotherapy pool we need to think like physiotherapists and understand how the properties of water change biomechanics and normal human movement.