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MOBILE DEVICE APPLICATIONS ENHANCE COMMUNICATION FOR DISABLED PERSONS

Marianjoy Patients Use iPad & iPod Touch to Communicate with Friends & Family

July 26, 2010, Wheaton, IL – Using the popular Apple® iPod Touch and iPad, Speech Language Pathologists at Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospitals have been able to break the barriers of accessible and affordable Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for patients. This advancement is part of Marianjoy’s Assistive Technology Institute which provides technological solutions for individuals with disabilities.

Previously, customary AAC devices cost thousands of dollars and are usually only partially covered by insurance. The new Apple devices and applications used at Marianjoy are much more cost effective when compared to predecessors. Apple’s iPod Touch starts at \$199 and the applications cost anywhere from a few dollars to \$189.99. The evolution of technology has made these devices accessible to many more individuals with limited communication abilities. Patients who have difficulty speaking or communicating can do so using applications such as Proloquo2Go, which can be customized with personal phrases and pictures. The devices are also used as organization systems for individuals with memory difficulties. Applications are also available for patients who cannot type – they are able to speak into a microphone and the program types the message which can then be sent as an email.

Stephanie Bay and Andrea Quill, inpatient speech language pathologists at Marianjoy, have used these applications with great success. “These applications have turned communication on its head,” notes Bay. “For a few hundred dollars, patients and families can communicate more successfully. We had one patient recently customize his application to request his favorite music. All he had to do was touch a picture of his favorite artist and the application spoke for him. It’s truly an amazing way to communicate and best of all, it’s an affordable solution.”

The AAC devices are part of Assistive Communication and Daily Living Center, one of seven centers that make up The Assistive Technology Institute at Marianjoy. The remaining centers that comprise the Assistive Technology Institute include Drivers Rehabilitation Center, Balance and Vestibular Center, Wheelchair and Positioning Center, Prosthetic and Orthotic Center, Swallowing and Voice Center, and Gait Analysis and Mobility Center; all of which aim to maximize an individual’s function and independence.

Bay and Quill, along with other Marianjoy clinicians, look forward to continued advancement of the centers. “This is just the beginning,” states Quill. “Technological advances in all of the aforementioned areas are going to lead to better and better experiences for patients and that’s why we are here.”

Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital is a nonprofit teaching hospital in Wheaton, Illinois, dedicated to the delivery of physical medicine and rehabilitation programs including stroke, neuromuscular, orthopedic,

brain injury, spinal cord injury, and pediatrics. Marianjoy's \$60 million, 120 private room replacement hospital is a state-of-the-art facility designed to enhance the naturally holistic approach to rehabilitation. Founded in 1972, Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital maintains an extensive network of inpatient, subacute, and outpatient sites and physician clinics throughout the Chicago area. Marianjoy is a member of Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare.

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