

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Carina Botes takes us through her routine at Amana Healthcare

LULU HAMDAN AND SANAD SHAIKH

At the mention of work, Carina Botes' eyes light up. Growing up in South Africa as the daughter of a nurse, Botes was confident she wanted to be in the healthcare industry and had a special passion for rehabilitation.

However, it wasn't until Botes was sixteen and her cousin visited from the UK after completing his studies in physiotherapy that her calling was triggered.

Botes has successfully accomplished her goal. She now spends her days working as a physiotherapist at Amana Healthcare, a specialised provider of long-term acute care, post-acute rehabilitation, transitional care and home care services. She currently looks after seven patients: four paediatric and one adult in long-term care and two adults in post-acute rehabilitation who are regaining their ability to walk, speak and eat on their own after suffering a stroke and spinal cord injury respectively.

HIGH STANDARDS OF CARE

When asked why she decided to work in the UAE when she had options to choose from all around the world, Botes responds with a wide smile.

"I had received a post in the mail for the role of a physiotherapist. When I was trying to make the decision, the amount of sunshine here definitely helped.

"For a start, I wanted to work at a hospital that is accredited at US and international standards. Amana Healthcare has both CARF and JCI accreditation, which represents the top Western quality of medical care

in the region," she adds. "Also, one of the fundamental reasons I chose Amana Healthcare was the ability to develop a close relationship with the people I care for each day. I spend at least one to two hours daily with each of my patients, which is on a par with the best rehabilitation hospitals in the world. Working with the same therapists through their rehabilitation programme is hugely beneficial to patients and is far better than

"Helping [patients] transition from our post-acute rehabilitation service to home care services to eventually return to their regular routine at home and at work is our goal for each patient."

Carina Botes
Physiotherapist

seeing a different therapist each day, which happens when resources are constrained. Amana Healthcare makes this possible."

Botes also enjoys the multidisciplinary team approach to patient care at Amana. A specialist physician, nurse, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech therapist and dietician meet every morning to develop or review a customised plan for each patient.



Pictures: Lulu Hamdan and Sanad Shaikh



Sultan, 23, is a post-acute rehabilitation patient being treated at Amana

The self-balancing REX Bionic Exoskeleton helps those with severe mobility impairments to walk. Amana has the only model in the Middle East and North Africa

BREAK-UP OF A TYPICAL DAY

7.30am

Staff meeting to plan the day ahead for each patient and highlight any important information

8am

Treating long-term care patient

9am

Treating one post-acute rehabilitation patient (currently Sultan) for his spinal cord injury.

Sessions focus on strengthening and endurance training of upper limbs, lower limb passive movements and stretches, transfers (between wheelchair, bed, gym bed,



and floor), wheelchair mobility, pressure relief techniques and cardiovascular endurance. Teaching patient exercises such as strengthening and stretching, which he can practise on his own.

11am

Treating long-term care patients

12pm Lunch

1pm

Treating one post-acute rehabilitation patient: post-stroke with left-sided weakness.

Sessions focus on core and left hip stabilisation exercises, working on safe and independent transfers, gait re-education using different assistive devices, and wheelchair mobility training.

3pm

Treat long-term care patients

5pm

Responding to emails and completing statistics

Botes' spinal cord injury patient is Sultan, a 23-year-old Emirati from Al Ain who incurred the injury as a result of a recent car accident and had previously spent five years serving his country as a soldier.

MAKING A CONNECTION

One of the key constituents of Botes' relationship with Sultan is her interaction with his family. "We have family meetings in the first two weeks of a patient's stay where the physician, physiotherapist, speech therapist, nurse, occupational therapist and dietician come together to review the patient's progress and explain where things stand," she says.

"The reason for this interaction is both practical and informative. It's important to answer any questions they may have and to make sure the family is fully educated on the patient's

case for when he is discharged back home."

Aside from the medical care, Botes regularly uses cutting-edge rehabilitation technologies to help improve patient care. She hoists patients into the REX Bionic Exoskeleton, a self-supporting and self-balancing robotic device that allows people with severe mobility impairments to walk independently. The device, which originates from New Zealand, is the only one of its kind in the entire Middle East and North Africa and is used exclusively at Amana Healthcare.

When Sultan craves an outing, Botes joins him for a visit to the mall or to the park for a change of scenery, which also plays a role in improving Sultan's state of well-being and his quality of life.

Sultan is surprised by the progress he's made since start-

ing rehabilitation with Botes and is already contemplating his next goals. Despite his circumstances, he remains appreciative of his environment and the work people like Botes are doing for him.

"The staff are good and they're fun," he says. "Thankfully, my friends and family can also support me here as there is plenty of room for them to visit, stay and participate with me in various activities."

Botes says, "The satisfaction of seeing your patients' progress after they have experienced trauma is indescribable.

"Helping them transition from our post-acute rehabilitation service to home care services to eventually return to their regular routine at home and at work is our goal for each patient.

"The joy of this success is unparalleled." ■