

## **If You Expect To Get Better, You Probably Will!**

By Northern Rehab Physical Therapy Specialists

Research has shown that positive expectations increase the chances of a good clinical outcome. If you believe you will be successful, you will have a better attitude toward the situation, likely put in more effort, and keep trying after setbacks. A negative attitude will likely mean setbacks or failures lead to beliefs that the approach is not useful leading to early withdraw from the program that will negatively affect the outcome.

### **Your Expectations Influence Your Results**

There is research to prove that positive thinking and expectations make a difference in rehabilitation settings, including physical therapy. A review of 23 articles looking at outcomes for shoulder pain found patients who expected to recover and believed that they had some control of the outcome, ended up doing better than those who did not. Optimistic patients were found to have less pain and disability after completing rehab. Patients who believed they would have pain and disability after rehab tended to have more pain and disability. This research supports the concept that patient expectations influence the clinical outcome.

### **Your Therapist's Expectations Influence Your Recovery, Too**

Although patient positive attitude is important, physical therapist's goals and expectations for the patient are also important. There isn't much research specific to physical therapy, but a study completed in elementary schools by two psychologists showed that teacher expectations had an influence on student performance. They told teachers that randomly selected students in their classes were tested and found to be "late bloomers" and were expected to show large improvements in academic performance during the school year. When the students were tested 8 months later, the students the teachers believed would improve the most, did just that. It seems that when teachers think students have a lot of potential to improve, they hold them to higher standards. They teach more complex materials, don't settle for simplistic answers and are more willing to spend time instructing and working with these students. This philosophy easily transfers over into a PT clinic. Your physical therapist's positive expectations and goals are aimed for you to improve function and feel better, and quality physical therapist will work directly one-on-one with each patient to design the right program specific to their needs to ensure the best outcome. Ultimately, both patient and therapist expectations can impact the physical therapy outcome.

If you're not moving as much or as well as you would like, or living with pain, see your physical therapist. PTs are the most qualified professionals to help you move better and allow you to stay healthy and return to higher-quality lives.