



**St. Mary's Medical Center**

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## **ST. MARY'S MEDICAL CENTER ADDS NINTENDO Wii AS A NEW APPROACH TO PHYSICAL THERAPY**

*Doctors turn to video gaming system to treat rehabilitation patients*

San Francisco, Calif. (March 18, 2008)—St. Mary's Medical Center (SMMC) Acute Rehabilitation Unit adds Wii-habilitation—a physical therapy technique using the Nintendo Wii video gaming system to help patients meet rehabilitation goals. SMMC is one of the first Bay Area hospitals to take advantage of the Nintendo Wii's unusual game controls to strengthen muscles and coordinate motions in physical and occupational rehabilitation therapies.

Wii-habilitation is used to move the body in ways similar to traditional therapy exercises. The Nintendo Wii uses a wireless controller to direct the actions of animated athletes on screen. Using the controller, patients follow natural body movements associated with various sports and activities.

“Wii-habilitation is a fresh approach to physical and cognitive rehab therapy,” said Dr. Marc Wakasa, medical director of the Acute Rehabilitation Unit at SMMC. “The movements and animations used in conjunction with Nintendo Wii are helping patients achieve their rehabilitation goals through this popular video gaming activity.”

The Wii's interactive format helps patients recovering from strokes, spinal injury, broken bones and surgery. Patients use the skill sets associated with sports to rebuild lost skills, improve concentration and physical functions.

The program was pioneered and developed by Dr. Justin Liu, chair of back and trauma rehabilitation at SMMC. According to Dr. Liu, “In today's world of constant innovation, it is only natural that we use cutting edge technology to push the envelope of physical rehabilitation while making the overall process more exciting and fun. If patients have great success with achieving functional improvements by using the Wii, it is a very viable option for certain patients to purchase their own Wii system and continue using the program once they return home.”



Currently, St. Mary's offers Wii-habilitation video games for tennis, ping-pong and bowling. Wii-habilitation is a cost-effective program, totaling \$1,300 for equipment and set-up. Compared to traditional gym equipment, this is both significantly more economical and space efficient.

The Acute Rehabilitation Unit at SMMC specializes in stroke rehabilitation, spinal cord injury, head injury and general rehabilitation.

*Pictured: Marc Wakasa, MD, and Justin Liu, MD*

For more information on SMMC's Acute Rehabilitation Unit visit [http://www.stmarysmedicalcenter.org/Medical Services/Acute Physical Rehabilitation](http://www.stmarysmedicalcenter.org/Medical_Services/Acute_Physical_Rehabilitation).

### **About St. Mary's Medical Center**

St. Mary's Medical Center is a full-service acute care facility with more than 575 physicians and 1,100 employees who provide high-quality and affordable health care services to the Bay Area community. Home to advanced medical practices, such as the nation's first digital cardiac catheterization laboratory, pioneering spine surgery and comprehensive rehabilitation, St. Mary's Medical Center is one of San Francisco's leading hospitals, offering patients a full range of outpatient and inpatient services delivered with the human touch. For more information, please call (415) 668-1000 or visit <http://www.stmarysmedicalcenter.org>.