

## Integrated Therapy heals with power of water

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Following years of study and hands-on work, **Harriet Adams** decided to combine her background in physical therapy with the healing properties of warm water by establishing Integrated Therapy LLC. Opening its doors in 2000, the outpatient aquatic physical therapy business has proved beneficial to numerous patients working through difficult rehabilitation processes by taking their therapy into a pool. Since inception, Integrated Therapy's savvy owner has also expanded the business from one location to six, increasing its patient numbers 73 percent over the last six years and, despite difficult economic times, growing its revenue 10 percent annually.

"I think we are the largest aquatic physical therapy provider in Georgia, maybe bigger than that," Adams said. "What makes us unique is that we use the physiological effects of immersion, what you experience when you are in the water, to achieve rehab goals."

A student of Saint Mary's College in Raleigh, N.C., Adams obtained her bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and completed the physical therapist assistant program at Gwinnett Technical College. Also a former therapist at Shepherd Spinal Center, Adams' biggest influence in her current field came in the time she spent studying aquatic therapy techniques in Bad Ragaz, Switzerland, and learning about the therapeutic effects of the region's warm springs.

"The Romans have been doing it for a long time in the warm baths of England," Adams said. "They use aquatic therapy very frequently in Europe and I got to learn many different types of aquatic therapy techniques."

Combining the benefits of exercise with buoyancy and the resistance of warm water, aquatic physical therapy helps patients suffering from a variety of diagnoses, including muscle and joint pain and conditions like Parkinson's disease and fibromyalgia. It can also be used for recovery from orthopedic surgery. By allowing the body to move more freely and easily than on land, aquatic therapy decreases joint compression forces and helps reduce joint swelling through hydrostatic pressure.



Harriet Adams: Founded Integrated Therapy in 2000 and grew the company to include six locations.

“If you had a joint replacement or orthopedic condition, the decreased weight bearing the body experiences in the water helps with gait training,” Adams said. “Another great thing is the increased resistance created in all planes of movement. No matter what plane the patient is working in, they will receive symmetrical resistance.”

Along with the healing properties of water, what makes the experience at Integrated Therapy unique is the hands-on approach clinicians take with each patient, Adams said. After undergoing a thorough on-land evaluation, each patient works with a therapist in the pool to achieve rehabilitation goals.

“We get in the pool with every single patient. We’re not standing on the side of pool with a clipboard,” she said. “We are in the pool, one-on-one with the patient using our hands and using our clinical skills and utilizing physical properties of my patients [in] the water to achieve results.”

**Dr. Reuben Sloan**, a physiatrist with Resurgens Orthopaedics, has been referring patients to Integrated Therapy for years. He said water therapy can be particularly helpful to “less motivated” patients who have issues with traditional on-land therapy. While not everyone is happy to get into a bathing suit and into the water for rehabilitation, he said that, when all is said and done, patients thank him for the recommendation.

“The therapists at Integrated get into a bathing suit and get in the water with my patients; unheard of at other water therapy places,” Sloan said. “Integrated is clearly the best water therapy in Atlanta and my patients deserve and demand the best.”

**Hap Chandler**, a World War II veteran, has been a patient of Integrated Therapy since the practice opened. Turning 90 years old in July, Chandler credits Adams with giving him the ability to continue walking following a knee replacement.

“Harriet was recommended and in about three weeks she had me up and running and no pain. It was just remarkable,” Chandler said. “As a therapist, she borders on genius as far as I’m concerned.”

Chandler said he continues to visit Integrated Therapy to ease his lower back and hip pain. He was so impressed by the results he got from aquatic therapy, he introduced Adams to his surgeon, who often sends referrals her way.

“Harriet is responsible for my good health and ability to still walk without a walker or cane,” Chandler said. “I would recommend her wholeheartedly to anybody that needs therapy.”

As a result of its benefits, aquatic therapy is growing as a practice — something that is proven by the growth of Adams’ business. Along with its proven benefits, aquatic therapy’s growth is fueled by the fact that it is covered by insurance. Currently, Integrated Therapy is the only aquatic physical therapy provider for Kaiser Permanente of Georgia, a relationship it’s sustained for more than 10 years.

“I knew we were doing well when I started seeing some of the leading orthopedists in the area and rheumatologists referring their mothers to us,” Adams said.

Along with her success at Integrated Therapy, Adams is owner of Aquatic Consultants of Georgia Inc. and a co-author of the book “Aquatics Exercise Toolbox.” She also spent time traveling with the American Physical Therapy Association speaking on the benefits of aquatic therapy. In the future, Adams plans to continue working to improve the lives of patients with the healing power of water by growing her business even more — she is close to opening a seventh location. She also plans to keep Integrated Therapy’s focus on patients and customer service.

“The patient is not just a Social Security number to us. We recognize they are someone’s parent or sister and the focus is on the individual and their diagnosis and what their clinical needs are,” she said.