HOW TO GET STARTED:

Why choose aquatic therapy after knee surgery?
#1 **Faster recovery.**
According to a recent review\(^1\), a patient’s quality of life after total joint surgery is dependent on: age, sex, operated joint, primary or revision surgery, comorbidities, and baseline characteristics. Unfortunately, **not one** of these factors can be influenced by the physician or the therapist.
In contrast, a 2013 systematic review demonstrated the dramatic effect of aquatic therapy on daily life. This review determined that aquatic therapy was **more effective** than traditional land-based therapy in improving function after TKR -- and just as effective as land-based therapy in treating pain, edema, ROM and strengthening.\(^2\)

Additionally, a recent landmark multicenter study showed that starting aquatic therapy very early after surgery (**6 days post-op**) lead to better patient outcomes when compared with starting aquatic therapy just a week later, at **14 days post-op**.\(^3\)

#2 **No infection.**
Early immersion after orthopedic surgery has been shown to shown to cause **no increased risk for wound-related infection** in a 2013 systematic review.\(^2\) In fact, the review determined that wounds can be immersed as early as 6 days post-op, if covered in a bio-occusive dressing.

#3 **AMA-Acknowledged.**
Very few physical medicine and rehabilitation interventions get their own reimbursement code. Aquatic therapy is one which made the cut. Aquatic treatment is truly **unique in nature** and not universally available; only 2-3% of outpatient therapy providers offer aquatic therapy.\(^4\) Facilities which offer aquatics are able to provide patients a more comprehensive treatment menu.

#4 **Therapists unleashed.**
When therapists choose to put a knee patient in the water, they are making that choice because they understand that the properties of water offer an environment which is unachievable on land. The water’s buoyancy **reduces compression forces** on the knee and ankle significantly.\(^5\) The pool provides a safe environment in which to experiment and fail -- and thus to extend patient personal boundaries.\(^5\)

The hydrostatic pressure of the water helps control edema of the leg. It also allows the therapist to create an excellent resistive exercise program for the muscles of respiration and a **safer exercise environment** for the cardiac patient.\(^5\)

Water is also viscous and this viscosity allows the skilled therapist to create sensory and motor challenges that are perfectly matched to the person.

#5 **Patient participation.**
Somewhere in the recent past, we lost our awareness of the fact that **IT MATTERS** whether or not individuals want to come to therapy. Individuals who feel less pain, less stress and greater mood elevation while exercising tend to have better outcomes.

In addition, people with co-morbidities such as obesity, heart disease, neuropathy or arthritis may find the pool is the only place they can exercise... and the only place that they want to call home.

References.
\(^5\) Becker BE. Aquatic therapy: scientific foundations and clinical rehabilitation applications. PM R. 2009 Sep;1(9):859-72.