Course Objectives

**Course Description:**
After completing a comprehensive assessment of a patient’s bowel function and capturing at least 3 to 7 days of bowel patterns, the rehabilitation nurse can initiate interventions to address the predominant symptoms of either constipation or loose stool with or without fecal incontinence. This course will describe the various presentations of bowel dysfunction as it relates to underlying gastrointestinal, musculoskeletal, or neurological deficits. Evidence-based nursing care recommendations that are the least invasive and least expensive will be discussed. Pharmacologic treatment and the use of these interventions, as they impact the functional independence measure, will be presented. The symptoms of neurogenic bowel constipation and loose stool (with or without diarrhea/fecal incontinence) will be presented in association with various underlying pathologies and options for management. Prevention strategies that avoid constipation and diarrhea through natural and behavioral interventions will be presented, with an emphasis on the rehabilitation nurse’s role to educate patients and their caregivers.

**Course Objectives:**
- Compare characteristics of constipation, diarrhea, and fecal incontinence
- Describe the four primary underlying causes of constipation and how each can be optimally managed by the rehabilitation nurse
- Explain the proper procedure to resolve a fecal impaction and post-disimpaction care, with dietary support to prevent recurrence
- Contrast acute from chronic diarrhea and explain what nursing interventions can be implemented to improve symptoms
- Identify at least three nursing interventions to improve symptoms of fecal incontinence
- Devise short and long-term outcomes the rehabilitation nurse can measure for a patient who requires ongoing bowel management related to either constipation or fecal incontinence