

Neurophysiotherapy Rehab scores big with stroke patients

By Stuart Oakley

Not long ago, a son watched his father take his first steps. The steps were tiny and uncertain, but 72-year old Pietro Capotorto, with the aid of a cane, was walking. His son, Domenic could not believe what he was seeing.

In July 2000, Pietro Capotorto suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed in a wheelchair with his left arm held fast in a sling across his chest. He was admitted to William Osler Health Centre's Etobicoke Hospital Campus where he was treated for five weeks. His prognosis was not very good. Doctors felt the damage to his brain had been so severe he would likely not walk again or have use of his left arm. Domenic was told the most likely course of action was to place his father in a long-term care facility.

Youngza Choi, a physiotherapist who was part of the multi-disciplinary team involved in Pietro's discharge assessment, saw that Pietro was determined not let that happen. That determination marked a turning point in his rehabilitation.

"Stroke not only affects the individual but has an impact on the whole family as well as friends," explains Choi, who has more than 30 years' experience as a physiotherapist.



Physiotherapist Youngza Choi works with Pietro Capotorto, 72, to help him to learn to use his whole body following a stroke. The exercises stimulate the central nervous system and helps the affected side of the body to regain mobility.

which includes a physician, nurse, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, social worker and speech language pathologist, Pietro Capotorto was placed in rehab and began working with Youngza Choi and assistant Grace Wyzal. The results were encouraging and within a few weeks Domenic was able to see the vast improvement in his father.

"I knew my father wanted to improve, he just needed the

Cerebral Palsy. The technique helps the therapist to better understand how the brain responds to conditions such as stroke or other neurological disorders. Following a stroke, patients need to learn how to use compensatory movement so that they are not using just one side of their body but are learning to use their whole body. Otherwise, as in the case of Pietro Capotorto, the patient experiences joint misalignment and immobility. This is accomplished by using neurotherapeutic techniques that

stimulate the central nervous system.

The aim of therapy is to strengthen the normal movement patterns so that the patient can maintain an appropriate posture and has balance so that they can walk and have mobility in their arms, legs, trunk and head. The ultimate goal is to have the person return to as normal a life as they can have and be in the community where they belong.

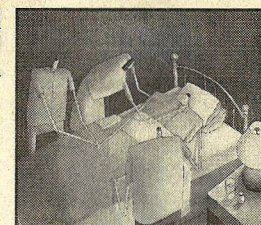
fered a stroke that has taken away some of their independence because they are confined to wheelchair, walking is everything. Understanding how the brain is affected after stroke helps the therapist to better tailor treatment that will enable patients to reach their goal."

VanLeeuwen's patient was a 70-year old man who had had a stroke. His doctor had prepared the family to expect that the man would not walk again. But thanks to NDT and the efforts of VanLeeuwen and the rehabilitation team, the patient is not only walking today but is practicing at a driving range to prepare for a challenging game of

golf in Florida this winter.

"From the start Ken [not his real name] was focused on being able to walk and to be able to swing a club. So together we developed a treatment regimen that would help him reach those goals. We would work for hours helping him to learn how to stand and balance so that he could swing a golf club. And due in large part to Ken's determination, he is swinging a club somewhere in Florida and that makes me feel very good about my work."

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