



FYZICAL Therapy

CAN AID WITH PARKINSON'S DIAGNOSIS

By Joanne Fox

Just the two words “Parkinson’s Disease” can conjure up images of celebrity Michael J. Fox and his struggles with a diagnosis.

April as Parkinson’s Awareness Month (the birth month of James Parkinson, the London physician who was the first to describe Parkinson’s disease in 1817) strives to point out that prevention and early symptoms can prepare individuals to thrive despite the prognosis.

At the top of the symptoms list for Parkinson’s Disease are dizziness and imbalance. According to Dr. Sarah Sitzmann-Ruehle, a physical therapist at FYZICAL Therapy and Balance Centers, Dakota Dunes, those two symptoms should always be investigated.

“These conditions are all diagnosed and treated at FYZICAL or a referral is made if the dizziness is coming from a source outside of the vestibular system,” she said. “Imbalance can be in conjunction with dizziness or can be present on its own from various reasons.”

FYZICAL offers a variety of services for women who experience these symptoms, Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle pointed out.

“Patients will initially see a Doctor of Physical Therapy for a consultation to discern the possible causes of the dizziness/imbalance,” she said. “Testing may need to be done to further confirm a diagnosis using state-of-the-art technology such as the Computerized Dynamic Posturography or Videonystagmography test.”

The therapist will also use standard balance testing while is patient is hooked to the Safety Overhead System which is a track and harness system designed to prevent falls, Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle explained.

“A patient is always safe while in the clinic and doing any testing or treatment,” she said. “Once a therapist has a diagnosis, vestibular balance retraining can begin which is physical therapy specifically focused on treating the inner ear and the balance systems of the body.”

Dr. Sitzmann-Ruehle reported the patients enjoy the safety of the harness system at FYZICAL.

“Balance must be addressed but it can be scary to work on challenging tasks such as stairs or uneven surfaces while relying on another person to support your body weight,” she acknowledged. “However, with the harness system, the patient is always secured to the ceiling and falls are not a concern. This helps gain confidence as a patient is practicing balance and gaining independence.”



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