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Innovative Technologies Offer New Hope for Neurologically Impaired Patients

Fairlawn Rehabilitation Hospital recently introduced three new innovative technologies to enhance treatment for people with neurological injuries and illnesses.

They are:

The AutoAmbulator

The AutoAmbulator is a highly sophisticated robotic treadmill that makes it possible for non-ambulatory patients to walk. The AutoAmbulator has an overhead hoist system designed to safely support the patient while the machine's robotics move the patient's legs. This allows the individual to achieve reciprocal and symmetrical gait patterns that can be transferred to ground ambulation.

The AutoAmbulator is most often used with patients who have had strokes and brain or spinal cord injuries as well as those with neurological disorders such as Parkinson's Disease and Multiple Sclerosis. Fairlawn is one of only 22 facilities in the United States currently using this FDA approved technology.



VitalStim Therapy

VitalStim is an innovative therapy used to retrain throat muscles affected by dysphagia (swallowing disorders). VitalStim stimulates inactive or atrophied swallowing muscles by passing a small electrical current through external electrodes on the neck. The current, controlled by a small hand-held device operated by a trained speech therapist, causes the muscles to contract. With repeated therapy, throat muscles are retrained, and the patient progresses to an optimum level of swallow function.



More than 15 million Americans suffer from swallowing disorders. In fact, 75 percent of stroke survivors develop difficulties with swallowing. It also affects those with brain injury, MS, Parkinson's Disease, head/neck cancer, and brain tumors. Dysphagia can impact a person's ability to eat and drink (often leading to feeding tubes), cause aspiration pneumonia, and malnutrition. The loss of pleasure associated with the social aspects of eating and drinking also affects a person's psycho-social well being. VitalStim clinical trials found a success rate of 80% in improved swallowing function (compared to 33% for traditional therapy). In patients with severe dysphagia, clinical trials found that 90% of patients experienced restored swallowing past the point of requiring a feeding tube.



For more information about VitalStim Therapy and how it has helped Fairlawn patients, go to [Success Stories](#).

SaebFlex

SaeboFlex is a customized orthotic device that allows people with upper extremity paralysis to flex their fingers and grasp even the smallest of objects.

SaeboFlex positions the wrist and fingers into extension in preparation for functional activities. Then the patient grasps an object by voluntarily flexing the fingers. The device's extension spring-loaded system assists the patient in reopening the hand to release the object.



SaeboFlex allows the patient to begin using his/her hand immediately, and unilateral arm training can begin early on in the rehabilitation process. It also allows the patient to control finger flexors while increasing flexor strength.

