

Summary of the January, 2012 Program**“The Balancing Act”***Speaker: Fred Shirley, MS, PT, CEAS*

The North Central Florida Post Polio Support Group once again welcomed Fred Shirley as our guest speaker for our January 2012 meeting. Mr. Shirley is with Citrus Memorial Health Systems and has been our group therapist for 17 years.

Mr. Shirley spoke with us about balance. He explained that we should guard ourselves against falls, in fact, walking is a controlled fall.

What is balance? The ability to control the center of gravity over the base of support in a given sensory environment.

Balance is the result of interacting between the individual the task and the environment.

Balance issues and falls are life-changing. 30% of people over 65 and 50% of people over 80 fall each year. Falls are the number one injury-related reasons seniors enter the hospital. 90% of hip fractures are caused by falls. Falls cause injuries, death, loss of independence and fears that limit activities.

Where does balance come from? Our balance is the result of multiple systems in our body working together in harmony. These systems include our somatosensory system, vision, and vestibular system (inner ear).

Have you ever been sitting in a parked car and the car next to you starts moving and you feel as if you are moving too? That is your vestibular system.

With our muscle memory we preconceive how much muscle we need to lift something.

Our vision is a big part of balance and it is important to have your vision checked at least yearly.

Thick carpet or carpet padding in a room can cause a fall.

Sea sickness is caused when our eyes can't find a fixed horizon.

Our cone of stability is how far you can lean forward or back without taking a step.

Risk Factors:

- lower body weakness
- problems with walking and balance
- multiple medications
- other health conditions

Basic Fall Prevention Tips:

- fall proof your home
- check vision and hearing often

- review medications with your physician or pharmacist
- use assistive devices (cane, walker, braces)
- wear rubber soled, low-heeled shoes

To reduce your risk of falls, pay attention to your health and nutrition, exercise regularly, and stay active.

Review your medications, reduce side effects and interactions and see a doctor.

Sometimes we mistake thirst for hunger or boredom for hunger. It is easy to get dehydrated.

Look for common risk factors such as tripping hazards, lack of railings or grab bars, slippery surfaces, awkward reaches, storage, poor lighting, unstable furniture and pets.

Exercise increases your upper and lower body strength, works on hand strength, improves balance and coordination and increases your over-all well being. But, as post polio patients, do not stretch your muscles too much, tightness is what we are functioning on.

Safety tips for exercising: start slowly, breathe, monitor your exertion, use safety equipment and stay hydrated.

As always, we thank Fred Shirley for his informative program and look forward to his next visit.

Summary, January 2012 Polio Post News by Sharon Daszczyński