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Functional Tone Management – The SaeboFlex
Allied Rehab, Providing the Latest Rehabilitation Advancements For Patients Who Have Suffered a Stroke

The FTM (Functional Tone Management) arm-training program is designed for people who have suffered a stroke or other neurological impairment and have residual hemiparesis of their arm. The program focuses on initiation and repetition of specific tasks to promote strength, function and recovery. One of the greatest challenges in rehabilitation of the stroke patient is achieving recovery of the upper extremity and regaining use of the arm functionally during daily tasks.

The primary objective of this program is to enable the patient to use the involved hand. In some cases this approach may be used only a few days or weeks following the stroke. Allied Rehab's FTM program utilizes traditional treatment approaches in conjunction with the new and innovative SaeboFlex.

The SaeboFlex rehabilitation device assists neurologically impaired individuals with opening their hand for grasp and release activities that would otherwise be impossible. The SaeboFlex is a custom dynamic splint (orthosis) that features a spring-loaded system. In addition, the SaeboFlex is non-electrically based and is purely mechanical, meaning the patient and their muscles perform the exercises. Following a stroke the patient is often unable to control movement patterns of an affected limb. Frequently the extremity assumes various postures including bending of the wrist and a fist hand. The abnormal muscle tone prevents the patient from using the arm for grasp and release of objects. Over time this may lead to deformities and contracture of the joint involved. The inability to use the hand contributes also to the development of elbow and shoulder complications. The patient, as a result, becomes frustrated by the inability to grasp and release objects. In many cases this frustration leads to a decreased desire to use the affected arm.

The main benefit of the FTM program's approach is the ability of the stroke survivor or neurological patient to use their involved hand in therapy immediately following the event, thereby decreasing frustration. Another component that separates Allied Rehab's FTM program apart from others is the fact that compensatory movement patterns are taken into account and hopefully diminished. The main purpose of the shoulder and elbow is to put the hand in a position to interact with the environment. A stroke survivor suffering from hemiparesis will exhibit limited movement in the shoulder and elbow. Therefore, compensatory (adjustment to disability) movements will occur when performing the grasping tasks. This automatic compensation is diminished substantially when the same patient is then able to incorporate their hand into treatment.

The goal of the FTM program and the SaeboFlex device is to regain function of the weaker extremity for use in daily life activities. Al Thomas a program participant and Iris Lovallo a registered Occupational Therapist discuss his experiences with SaeboFlex.

Al Thomas, a very active sixty nine year old man, suffered a stroke September 10, 1996 that resulted in the loss of movement with his left arm. Al, through the direction of Iris Lovallo, an Occupational Therapist with Allied Rehab, began using the SaeboFlex orthosis on October 2005. The goal Al has: "I hope to get my hand back to normal. I want to use my hand to hold an eating utensil and tie my shoes. Al is very independent; he lives alone and still drives. When asked what he enjoys as hobbies he states, "I enjoy cooking. I have been limited in what I can do since the stroke. I don't have use of my left hand."

Iris, who is one of six Allied Rehab therapists who have been trained in FTM states "Al has improved with the use of the SaeboFlex. He is not only able to grasp and release objects better, but has also improved the quality of the movement patterns of the shoulder and elbow. SaeboFlex has assisted in decreasing tightness in the wrist and hand. Al has displayed improved control during grasp and release activities, the foundation of the program." Al was 9 years post stroke but the research shows individuals up to 20 years post neurological injury can show improvement in strength as well as hand function. In addition, the ability to use the hand in therapy or at home has been reported as extremely motivating during the recovery process.

For information on the SaeboFlex /F.T.M. Program at Allied Rehab, please contact Iris Lovallo at (570) 348-1360.

