Parkinson's Virtual Reality Gait Training Device Improves Quality of Life

Newly released virtual reality gait training device shown to improve quality of life for Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and other movement disorders

Haifa, Israel (PRWEB) January 26, 2009 -- Parkinson's disease and Multiple Sclerosis patients are discovering first-hand that daily exercise with a new virtual reality device, the GaitAid Virtual Walker, has a positive effect on their walking ability, minimizing balance problems and improving quality of life.

Yoram Baram, a computer science professor and incumbent of the Roy Matas / Winnipeg Chair in Biomedical Engineering at the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology has collaborated with several neurologists specializing in treating Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis and other movement disorders, in developing and testing a new, non-invasive training device designed to proactively minimize freezing and balance problems during walking. The noticeable physical and mental improvement of patients participating in clinical studies led Baram to bring the GaitAid device to market as a FDA registered medical device and is offering the device for a trial period on his company's website (www.medigait.com).

A Professor of Neurology and Director of the Movement Disorder Clinic of The Rambam Medical Center, Yehudit Aharon, M.D., specializes in the treatment of Parkinson's Disease. "The development of this device has been invaluable to my patients. They have better balance, reduction of freezing and improved confidence," states Dr. Aharon.

Parkinson's and Multiple Sclerosis patients participating in Baram's GaitAid training notice improvement in walking, and maintaining balance. According to a GaitAid device user, "This device gives me the feeling that I am taking control of my illness. I got my confidence back and can actually enjoy going out for a walk without the fear of falling down. But most importantly, my mental state of being is much more positive and I'm more independent."

Professor of Neurology and Director of the Center for Multiple Sclerosis and Brain of the Carmel Medical Center, Ariel Miller, M.D., specializes in the treatment of Multiple Sclerosis. "The results clearly indicate that the device helps patients with MS control their gait. The degree of improvement is proportional to the degree of impairment. The results support the potential role of the device as a rehabilitation modality in MS, and substantiate their specific implementation in efforts to alleviate, improve, and restore mobility in patients with gait disturbances due to neurological disorders in general", states Dr. Miller.

Prof. Baram states, "My biggest joy is when a person using my GaitAid device calls me to say 'Thank you, Yoram; Using the GaitAid has changed my life."

The user-friendly device includes special glasses and earphones which provide sensory feedback of visual images and sounds in response to the patient's movements. Training involves walking with the device for up to twenty minutes. These training sessions evoke a neuroplastic response in the patient's brain, creating new healthy neural circuits which by-pass the disease-damaged areas.

Parkinson's Disease remains a mystery of medical science. For reason's unknown, certain brain cells stop...
producing a substance called Dopamine, which affects an individual's movement, strength and balance. There is currently no cure, though stem cell research offers future promise.

Emerging scientific evidence confirms that movement lessens neurological deterioration that contributes to Parkinson's and Multiple Sclerosis progression.

The idea for the GaitAid project was sparked 12 years ago while Professor Baram was designing a mechanism for NASA to navigate low-flying helicopters around obstacles. The concept of the design, which Baram later applied to the medical device, is that the optical images of objects help the observer navigate, stabilize and pace movement in space.

The device is available for a trial period of 30 days:

online www.medigait.com
email: support (at) medigait (dot) com
or by phone 888-777-9906.

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Contact Information
Amir Baram
Medi Gait LTD
http://www.medigait.com
888-777-9906

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