Media Release

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For immediate release

Seeing results

London, Ontario - Brain injury and stroke patients in the rehabilitation program at St. Joseph’s Parkwood Hospital are benefiting from an innovative new approach to therapy called neuro-optometric rehabilitation. Before this new approach, therapists and patients were frustrated by stubborn problems with balance and coordination that defied traditional therapy approaches. But when physiotherapist Shannon McGuire learned the root of these problems may be related to vision complications, she was determined to implement neuro-optometric rehabilitation at Parkwood.

Shannon connected with London optometrist Dr. Cheryl Letheren, one of only four registered NORA (neuro-optometric rehabilitation association) optometrists in Canada, to incorporate neuro-optometric rehabilitation into Parkwood’s programs. It is the only hospital-based neuro-optometric program in Canada. “We take a very collaborative approach to patients’ therapy,” says Dr. Letheren. “The physiotherapists and occupational therapists provide me with clues to the patient's issues in gait and reading and then I collaborate with them to stabilize the vision disturbances that are impairing the patient’s rehabilitation.”

A brain injury or stroke can disrupt the visual process, interfering with the flow and processing of information that results in vision problems such as blurred or double vision, reading or comprehension difficulties, or loss of visual field. Neuro-optometrists treat these problems with lenses, prisms and vision therapy.

Vision rehab follows two streams. Visual midline shift, when a patient’s perception of where their middle is becomes distorted and leads to balance problems, is treated with prisms to normalize how they move through space. Post-trauma vision syndrome, when a patient finds it too exhausting to walk through a busy space or to read, is also treated with prisms.

Often people who experience a stroke or brain injury don’t seek advice for their visual problems; they just feel it’s something they need to cope with. The Parkwood Hospital rehabilitation team is embracing the new treatment for these problems. “The patient outcomes are very rewarding,” says Shannon.

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