

Rocking Chair



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General information:

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Recognizing NASA's rocking results, it was later determined that rocking was also the best solution for CFS patients. Rocking provides easy, non-weight bearing, rhythmic motion and does a very important job in autonomic tone for a population that has difficulty accomplishing exercise. (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome affects approximately half a million people in the US.)

Varicose Veins

There is research on the use of rocking to stimulate circulation, improve muscle tone, and to help prevent and cure varicose veins. Many pregnancy support articles and web sites recommend rocking in a rocking chair to prevent the development of varicose veins.

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Motion Sickness

Case studies of motion sickness suggests that balance training and habituation (reducing or modifying one's response to a stimulus that causes motion sickness) may help diminish the symptoms of the condition. The use of habituation for the treatment of motion sickness is based on the theory that when an individual prone to motion sickness is repetitively exposed to the stimulus that causes motion sickness (such as driving in a car or riding on an elevator) in a controlled, supervised fashion, they will become used to (habituate) that stimulus. Over time, the stimulus will no longer evoke the motion sickness response, and symptoms will diminish.

Biofeedback Training and Relaxation

In a study of 55 pilots who had to stop flying due to symptoms of motion sickness, 76% of them successfully overcame their motion sickness and were able to return to work after participating in a biofeedback training and relaxation program. Biofeedback instruments recorded skin temperature and changes in muscle tension while the pilots were exposed to a stimulus that caused motion sickness (sitting in a tilting, rotating chair). While in the chair, the pilots performed various relaxation techniques, such as deep muscle relaxation and mental imagery. Over time, the pilots became used to the rotating chair, and they no longer felt sick because they learned to relax.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

The goal of cognitive behavioral therapy is to alleviate the anxiety that some people experience simply thinking about movement or motion sickness. In a study of 50 pilots who occasionally experienced motion sickness, 86% of them successfully overcame their symptoms after cognitive behavioral therapy. During this therapy, individuals are exposed to a provocative stimulus (such as a tilting, rotating chair) in a slow and controlled fashion until they experience some symptoms of motion sickness, but not until the symptoms become overwhelming. As the individual performs better and better on the rotating chair, they build confidence, reducing their anxiety.

References:

Dobie TG, May JG. Cognitive-behavioral management of motion sickness. *Aviat Space Environ Med.* 1994;65(10 Pt 2):C1-C20.

Jozsvai EE, Pigeau RA. The effect of autogenic training and biofeedback on motion sickness tolerance. *Aviat Space Environ Med.* 1996; 67(10):963-968.

Rine RM, Schubert MC, Balkany TJ. Visual-vestibular habituation and balance training for motion sickness. *Phys Ther.* 1999;79:949-957.

(Reference not cited.)

A common hypothesis for the cause of motion sickness is that it evolved as a defense

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mechanism against neurotoxins.[6] The area postrema in the brain is responsible for inducing vomiting when poisons are detected, and for resolving conflicts between vision and balance. When feeling motion but not seeing it (for example, in a ship with no windows), the inner ear transmits to the brain that it senses motion, but the eyes tell the brain that everything is still. As a result of the discordance, the brain will come to the conclusion that one of them is hallucinating and further conclude that the hallucination is due to poison ingestion. The brain responds by inducing vomiting, to clear the supposed toxin.

PHYS THERAPY Journal

Vol. 79, No. 10, October 1999, pp. 949-957 Visual-Vestibular Habituation and Balance Training for Motion Sickness; Rose Marie Rine, Michael Schubert and Thomas J Balkany.

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MC Schubert, PT, is a doctoral student and a graduate research assistant in the physical therapy program at the University of Miami

TJ Balkany, MD, is Hotchkiss Distinguished Professor of Otolaryngology, Neurological Surgery and Pediatrics, The Ear Institute, Department of Otolaryngology, University of Miami.

Background and Purpose. This case report describes physical therapy for motion sickness in a 34-year-old woman. The purpose of the report is twofold: (1) to provide an overview of the literature regarding motion sickness syndrome, causal factors, and rationale for treatment and (2) to describe the evaluation and treatment of a patient with motion sickness. **Case Description and Outcomes.** The patient initially had moderate to severe visually induced motion sickness, which affected her functional abilities and prevented her from working. Following 10 weeks of a primarily home-based program of visual-vestibular habituation and balance training, her symptoms were alleviated and she could resume all work-related activities. **Discussion.** Although motion sickness affects nearly one third of all people who travel by land, sea, or air, little documentation exists regarding prevention or management.

Studies of animals and humans with motion sickness and interventions to reduce it have indicated that habituation, a reduction or modification in response to the provoking stimulus, can be achieved with repetitive visual and vestibular stimuli.

Key Words: Habituation • Motion sickness • Physical therapy • Sensory conflict theory

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Postoperative Recovery

Childbirth

Title: Rock away the pain.

Authors: Gutfeld, G. Rao, L.

Source: Prevention; Apr92, Vol. 44 Issue 4, p15, 2p, 1 illustration

Document Type: Article

Subject Terms: *CHILDBIRTH

Abstract: Reports the results of a study researchers performed on the effects of rocking, along with modified diet, medications and suppositories, on 290 women who had just given birth by cesarean section. Rocking's effect on the alleviation of intestinal gas; A sooner departure for mothers from the hospital; How the rocking motion proves beneficial.

In an article in the "Physical Therapy Review" 40:818, 1960; a study of women who had cesarean sections showed a faster recovery if they spent an hour a day rocking. A follow-up study in Galveston, Texas in December of 1990 followed women who had cesarean sections and showed that rocking mothers had less gas pains, walked faster, and left the hospital one day sooner than non-rocking mothers. This article was published in the "Journal of Prenatal Nursing" on December 24, December 1990.

Knee Replacement Surgery

Orthopedic surgeons have long recommended rocking as a later phase of those who are re-cooperating from knee replacement surgery.

Post-Operative Recovery & "Speed Healing"

Speed Healing - Studies conducted at the Medical College of Virginia have shown that 'kinetic therapy' (the constant, gentle motion rocking in a rocking chair) can dramatically speed healing in severely ill patients. Dr Heinrich Addeheim of the Kinetic Therapy Clinic says that with regular rocking, "the body settles into a natural rhythm that harnesses incredible powers of recuperation and regeneration". We've seen cases of patients recuperating from heart attack and stroke - without any trace of permanent damage - simply because they used a rocking chair while they were recovering. I've seen people bedridden with arthritis who were up and around inside a week after regular use of the rocking chair. It can be used to cure colds, flu, diabetes and even some types of cancer. It's not just a piece of furniture - it's a remarkable medical device." The positive effects of rocking on recovering stroke patients are confirmed by a March 2006 Ottawa Clinical Study.

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Post-Op Ileus Recovery - Ileus is a condition in which there is an absence of muscular contractions of the intestine which normally move the food through the digestive system and can result in an intestinal obstruction. The article above also suggested the use of rocking chairs in recovery of other gas inducing surgeries which is the reason Robert Massey chose a similar subject for his PhD. dissertation. He was in charge of nursing at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. His study was on the effects of rocking on post operative Ileus Duration (return of bowel function) subjective pain and time to discharge following cancer related abdominal surgery. His findings which will be published in August showed post operative Ileus function returned 16.8 hours earlier than normal recoveries. In most hospital settings that could shorten the hospital stay by one day!

From PubMed

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=7922294&dopt=Abstract QJM. 1994 Jul;87(7):423-9

[Related Articles, Links](#)

Use of the rocking bed in the treatment of neurogenic respiratory insufficiency.

Chalmers RM, Howard RS, Wiles CM, Spencer GT.

Lane-Fox Unit, St Thomas' Hospital, London, UK.

We describe 53 patients who received ventilatory support with a rocking bed. Diagnoses included previous poliomyelitis (30), muscular dystrophy (12), motor neurone disease (4), adult-onset acid maltase deficiency (4) and a miscellaneous group (3). Patients presented with respiratory insufficiency characterized by diaphragm weakness, progressive nocturnal hypoventilation and/or acute or chronic respiratory failure. Domiciliary rocking beds were used by 43 patients for a mean of 16.0 years (range 1 month to 35 years). Most patients were able to breathe adequately by day when sitting or standing, but needed assistance by rocking bed for 6-11 h when lying down for sleep. The rocking bed was well-tolerated, and associated with both symptomatic relief and amelioration of arterial blood gas abnormalities. Seventeen of these 43 patients discontinued its use, either because of discomfort (9) or increasing respiratory insufficiency (8). The rocking bed is a valuable adjunct in the management of the respiratory insufficiency associated with neuromuscular disease.

PMID: 7922294 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

Management of young children's acute pain and anxiety during invasive medical procedures.

- Kuttner L.

B.C. Children's Hospital, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

Post-Op Recovery in Pediatric Patients - The British Columbia Children's Hospital of Vancouver, Canada uses kinesthetic methods including Rocking Chair Therapy for post

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operative relief from acute, painful medical procedures. And for pediatric patients, this pain reduction technique is synergistic with analgesics and has long term benefits for pediatric patients. These pain reduction techniques are synergistic with analgesics and have long-term benefits for pediatric patients.

PMID: 2657691 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

Profiles Healthc Mark. 1992 Jul-Aug;(48):45-7.

Sudden infant death syndrome and possible relation to vestibular function.

Farrimond T.

University of Waikato, New Zealand.

Some infants seem to be born with a degree of respiratory centre immaturity which in combination with other problems such as illness, head colds, exposure to cold, air or smoke, may result in cessation of breathing. Vestibular stimulation by rocking has been shown to be beneficial for premature babies in reducing apnea. There also appear to be other benefits, resulting in more rapid maturation of the nerve cells of the cerebellum which is still developing during the first six months of life. The suggestion is made that crib deaths may be reduced by the use of automatically rocking cribs, particularly during the night when most deaths occur.

PMID: 2251079 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

Pediatrician. 1989;16(1-2):39-44.

NOT a concluded study yet, but notes I wrote during a talk with C Lutynski, who is in the middle of a research project, titled:

"Investigation of wave motion as a stress intervention method for Stage III breast cancer women."

Precious Passage wave cancer research

Carline Lutynski 860/889-3424, precious_passage@yahoo.com

Dr. Scott Kurtzman, director of surgery at Waterbury Hospital, is project investigator of the study. The general idea is to quantify how wave motion therapy, or simply, time spent on a boat, helps breast cancer patients alleviate stress.

"There is some scientific background showing that possibly in humans, but at least in animals, stress reduces the immune system," he said.

Kurtzman said the approach could work for other types of cancer and illnesses, but that breast cancer was a logical place to start.

The institutional review board of the UConn Health Center approved the study. Studies must go thru review board now. This was expedited but since they had no device, they had to use a boat. She believes the pre-natal explanation is central to the benefits.

Cellular memory is one factor. Another is, during the last trimester immune system killer cells form, infant preemies re-create womb environment they continue growth, not killer cell

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assays, but did growth continue, rocking environment they did continue growth. Womb features rocking, vestibular motion, no light, warmth heartbeat, fluid sounds, mother breathing tiny motion, infants 13 sec period, reduce adrenal stress, in medical community no connection except behavior, ie how does that effect lymph.

She recommends A&P (Anatomy & Physiology) in college. She has degree in civil engineering & metallurgy. The results creates an ah-ha experience, humbling, seeing quasi-independent systems. Look at references in the animal kingdom, omni-pendulums. Look back to cell memory. Her boat also had a gyrosensor.

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Infancy and Child Development, Motherhood

The infant's developmental outcomes were evaluated by the Denver Developmental Test in terms of social, emotional and motor development. The mother-child attachment and the calming effect on infant were assessed and evaluated as well. The infant's responses to stimuli were also analyzed. The participating infants stopped crying and showed calming effects when rhythmic patting and rocking were applied. They also had a capacity of conditioned learning by kicking back in response. The enriched infants smile, hold their heads up and sit and stand earlier than the control group. They also showed good emotion and better performance in mother-child attachment. The findings in this study suggest that infants have an ability to learn in utero and that the prenatal tactile sensation (rocking) vestibular enrichment may be an effective way to promote an infant's social, emotional and motor development.

Numerous articles in "Mothering" magazine extol the benefits of rocking for mother and child. Rocking soothes fussy babies and relaxes mothers. It stimulates the balance mechanism of the inner ear. It assists an infant's biological development and ability to be alert and attentive.

At the University of Waikato in New Zealand rocking stimulation has been shown to be beneficial for premature babies in reducing apnea (see SIDS).

Labor, Delivery and Recovery - Lamaze International advocates that moving freely in labor improves a woman's sense of control and decreases her need for pain medication. In choosing a care provider one of the things they suggest in the birthing room is a rocking chair.

Post Partum Weight Loss - Also, good news for post partum weight loss: rocking burns about 150 calories an hour and will help mothers recover more rapidly from the experience of childbirth (also from "Mothering" magazine).

Vestibular Function and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)

Vestibular Function - The vestibular system helps the body maintain its "postural equilibrium". It relates to or effects the perception of body position and movement and is essential in coordinating the position of the head and the movement of the eyes. The vestibular system resides in the inner ear.

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SIDS and VF - At the University of Waikato in New Zealand there have been studies relating vestibular function to SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Rocking stimulation has been shown to be beneficial for premature babies in reducing apnea.

Pregnancy & Delivery

We are all familiar with the theories and results of using cradles and rockers to calm babies and ease them off to sleep. We have run across research proposing that the rocking of babies by their mothers is not only soothing, but crucial in the bonding process between mother and child.

Prenatal Benefits - At the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Hua Chiew Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, authors Panthuraamphorn C. Dookchitra D., and Sanmaneechai M. composed a study and compiled their findings in a book "Effects of Prenatal Tactile and Vestibular Enrichment on Human Development". Their purpose was to investigate the influence of prenatal tactile and vestibular intervention on an infant's social, emotional and motor development and to evaluate maternal-child attachment after participation in the prenatal activity. One hundred and twenty women in the study were trained to stroke their abdomen, pat rhythmically on the fetus' bottom and rock themselves in a rocking chair 10-15 minutes each day throughout their pregnancy. Anne Ayres, an American nerve psychologist, recommends that at the start of the 10th week of pregnancy, women should rock 5 to 10 minutes twice a day. Her belief is that rocking promotes the development of the fetal nervous system.

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Autisme and Sensorial

Sensory Integration (SI) - SI is the ability to take in information through your physical senses (touch, movement, smell, taste, vision, and hearing) and put it together with prior information (stored) and make a meaningful response.

Sensory Integrative Dysfunction (SID) - SID is a disorder in which sensory input is not integrated or organized appropriately in the brain. Main symptoms of SID look like symptoms of other disabilities that include Fragile X, ADHD, ADD, Autism, Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD), and Tourette Syndrome.

Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT) - SIT is a theory used by occupational therapists. It is one approach used by therapists as part of a comprehensive and individualized intervention program. Its principles have been recommended for and applied to autism learning disabilities, attention problems, and developmental problems like Fragile X. Rocking in a rocking chair is one of the calming activities that are recommended. Sensory integration intervention is based on a neurophysiological view of autism. The late A. Jean Ayres, Ph.D. of the US developed the theory and practice of sensory integration. She believed every autistic child should have a rocker in his room.

The ARI (Autism Research Institute), always evaluating all forms of therapy, in recent years has seen an increase in interest of SIT for autistic adults and children. In treatment evaluation questionnaires that were administered, parents give sensory integration a very high percentage of 69% approval, with the highest of 47 therapies being Behavior Modification at 83%. Impressive.

Lorna Jean King (OTR, FAOTA) is one of the pioneers of Sensory Integration Therapy, lectures internationally, and is the Founder and Director of the Center for Neurodevelopmental Studies, Inc. in Phoenix, Arizona. When interviewed by the ARI she was asked about the importance of providing security and setting a calm tone in the home environment, especially after a busy day of schooling or therapy. She responded by saying "It may be as simple as having a rocking chair in their room".

Fragile X - Fragile X is a family of genetic conditions which impacts individuals and families in different ways. Fragile X Syndrome is the most common form of inherited mental impairment and is sometimes referred to as Mental Retardation. Sensory impairment or sensory processing difficulties are often a part of the puzzle. Rocking in a rocking chair is a recommended part of therapy, cited for its calming effects.

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In September of 2006, The American Library Association offered a workshop at their annual conference entitled "Welcoming Special Needs Children at Your Library". Lindsey Biel OCR/L, presenter and co-author of *Raising a Sensory Smart Child* suggests incorporating rocking chairs into the environment for its soothing and repetitive motion for children with a range of disorders.

Proprioceptive system

The Proprioceptive System helps children (and adults) to locate their bodies in space. Autistic children often have poor proprioception and will need help to develop their coordination. Therapy may include playing with weights, bouncing on a trampoline or a large ball, skipping or pushing heavy objects.

Vestibular system

The Vestibular System is located in our inner ear. It responds to movement and gravity and is therefore involved with our sense of balance, coordination and eye movements. Therapy can include hanging upside down, rocking chairs, swings, spinning, rolling, somersaulting, cartwheels and dancing. All these activities involve the head moving in different ways that stimulate the vestibular system. Be careful to observe the child carefully to be sure the movement is not over stimulating.

Back and forth movement appears less stimulating than side-to-side movement. The most stimulating movement tends to be rotational (spinning) and should be used carefully. Ideally activities will provide a variety of these movements. A rocking motion will usually calm a child while vigorous motions like spinning will stimulate them. Merry-go-rounds, being tossed on to cushions or jumping trampolines can be real favorites with some children.

Experimenting and careful introduction of each activity is the way to go.

<http://www.autism-help.org/family-physical-exercise-autism.htm>

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Vestibular Adaption and Rehabilitation

Baylor College of Medicine

Greg Ator, M.D.

May 21, 1992

A patient presenting with vague disequilibrium and occasional episodic vertigo is a common occurrence in the general otolaryngology clinic. These patients often have mild progressive symptoms without spontaneous resolution. Traditional treatment methods have relied upon medication such as Antivert® and Valium® and perhaps Cawthorne type exercises in an attempt to encourage central nervous system adaptation and rehabilitation. I will briefly describe vestibular physiology, as it relates to compensation, and discuss the design and efficacy of a program of vestibular rehabilitation.

The function of the vestibular system is to transduce head acceleration into a signal the brain can interpret. Exercise is important in vestibular compensation in that immobility has been demonstrated to prevent dynamic compensation from occurring.

The importance of exercise in vestibular rehabilitation is not new, having first been described by Cawthorne and Cooksey in 1946. They noted that patients who exercised early after a unilateral ablation did better and they did so faster than patients who did not exercise. This clinical observation in support of modern experimental evidence provides the basis for rehabilitation; CNS compensation is facilitated by exercises with visual and somatosensory stimulation.

A specific, tailored program is developed to address the particular deficits. The treatment strategy relies on the following factors: balance retraining for postural control mechanisms; eye and head coordination with progressively more difficult visual tracking tests; habituation therapy; and a general conditioning program.

Indications for rehabilitation therapy include patients with: movement induced dizziness or poor compensation after a unilateral vestibular injury; status post head injury; the elderly patient with vague disequilibrium; and poor compensation or recurrent symptoms after surgery.

Several large series have been published recently detailing results from vestibular rehabilitation programs. Horak and Shemway reported a prospective study of twenty-five subjects with a peripheral vestibular disorder and symptoms greater than six months duration. These patients were divided into three treatment groups.

The first group underwent a tailored program of twice weekly outpatient exercises. The second group was given a regiment of general (Cawthorne) exercises. Finally, a third group was given medications such as Antivert® and Valium® only.

The results are encouraging in that the patients who were on medication alone showed no

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objective improvement on posturography scores, but in the patients who had a tailored vestibular exercise regiment, there was a statistically significant increase in the posturography scores indicating improvement in compensation. A subjective dizziness index also showed significant improvement with the vestibular exercise program while no improvement was seen with the general exercise program and approximately 50% improvement with the medication alone group.

A prospective study from Shepard et al at the University of Michigan of 98 patients with diagnoses including peripheral, central, and mixed etiologies. These patients participated in a tailored program with twice daily home therapy lasting ten to fifteen weeks. Results showed a reduction in symptoms scores in 87% with complete resolution of symptoms in 36%. Patients with head injury accompanied by postural problems, but with normal visual and somatosensory systems, and those with secondary gain did the worst. Patients with episodic motion dysfunction had the best prognosis for improvement with this protocol.

In summary, vestibular rehabilitation is an important treatment modality for patients with vestibular dysfunction who are not surgical candidates. An increasing proportion of our society, the elderly, are often prime candidates for vestibular rehabilitation therapy. It appears that patients with peripheral vertigo with classical symptoms, especially of an episodic variety will definitely benefit from a vestibular rehabilitation program but also patients with a vague disequilibrium and probable central etiology for this condition may also benefit from vestibular rehabilitation therapy.

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Stress, Overall Fitness and or Elders

Seniors 'rocking' to good health. Columbia Hospital, Milwaukee, WI.

[No authors listed]

PMID: 10120011 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

Am J Sports Med. 1989 Mar-Apr;17(2):187-96.

Rock 'Til You Drop

24 April 1998

If heavy metal leads to senile dementia, elderly headbangers could do worse than head down to Kirkhaven nursing home in Rochester, USA. For as studies there have shown, residents who rock around the clock are both happier and healthier.

"The more they rocked, the better they felt," says nurse researcher Nancy Watson of Rochester University, speaking of a six-week study presented at the Eastern Nursing Research Society. "There's a stereotype of older people on a porch happily going back and forth in their rocking chairs. It turns out that the activity really does bring some peace of mind to many folks."

Benefits of zealous rocking for residents suffering from dementia include emotional well-being and an improved sense of balance. Patients who rock incessantly even tend to request less medication to ease their daily aches and pains. "It's been very well documented with infants that a gentle repetitive motion has a soothing effect," says Watson. "We've shown that the same is true in an older population that is emotionally distressed."

With some 1.6 million people currently in US nursing homes — more than half of whom suffer from some form of dementia — expect "rocking-chair therapy" to become the latest vogue. Good news for residents and nursing home staff .

Rock Your Stress Away

Studies suggest the humble, low-tech rocker can ease the stress and anxiety brought on by our high pressure, high-tech lives. Research has long confirmed what new mothers learn very quickly: rocking soothes babies, possibly because the motion mimics the sensation of being carried in the womb. The gentle back and forth of rocking transforms crying into cooing and magically changes a wakeful infant into one who sleeps...well, like a baby. But less has been known about rocking's effect on adults.

One recent study reveals the welcome news that rocking is as good for grandma and

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grandpa as it is for baby. Researchers recently conducted a study to examine the effect of rocking on nursing home residents who were suffering from dementia due to Alzheimer's disease or other causes. For six weeks, the 25 men and women rocked from 30 to 80 minutes every day. Subsequently, the rocking mechanism was disabled on the platform rockers and the result was observed.

During the first six weeks, nearly half the study group exhibited less anxiety, disorientation, tension and depression. Those who rocked 80 minutes per day showed the most dramatic difference, requesting pain medication less often and having fewer episodes of anxiety and depression. Researchers noted that those who achieved the greatest benefit were those who rocked for the longest amount of time over the course of the day, not necessarily during one sitting. They also noticed that when emotionally distraught residents were helped into rocking chairs and began rocking, the motion immediately calmed them.

An additional benefit was observed: rocking improved the balance of the study group, possibly because the rocking motion helps stimulate the body's ability to maintain balance.

Though researchers have not documented rocking's effect on adults in mid-life, evidence suggests that it must be as soothing for baby boomers as it is for their parents and children. Demand for rocking chairs has soared during the past few decades, and the plain wooden rocker has diversified to suit the tastes of both the chic set and couch potatoes, in the process spawning a whole category of furniture. "We don't sell as many of the old-fashioned maple Boston rockers as we did in the past," says Nick Cardi, "but we do sell a lot of Shaker-style and painted rockers, and in upholstered furniture, swivel rockers and glider rockers. Twenty years ago we had five or six different styles and now we're all over the place." The Cardi brothers conclude, "The population is rocking."

Rochester News

MEDIA CONTACT: Tom Rickey, (585) 275-7954, or Nancy Watson, (585) 273-2518

April 27, 1998

As Elders Rock, Emotional Burden of Dementia Eases

Nursing home residents who have dementia can literally rock away their anxiety and depression, nurse researchers have found, simply by rocking back and forth in a rocking chair for about an hour or two a day. Patients who rocked the most in a research study even requested less medication to ease their daily aches and pains, and their balance improved.

Nurses from the University of Rochester School of Nursing presented the work at a meeting of the Eastern Nursing Research Society April 23-25 in Rochester.

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"There's the stereotype of older people on a porch happily going back and forth in their rocking chairs," says nurse researcher Nancy Watson. "It turns out that the activity really does bring some peace of mind to many folks.

"It's been very well documented with infants that a gentle repetitive motion has a soothing effect. We've shown that the same is true in an older population that is emotionally distressed."

In a study funded by the New York State Department of Health, Watson studied 25 nursing home residents diagnosed as having dementia, either due to Alzheimer's disease or other causes. Nurses at Kirkhaven, a nursing home in Rochester, closely monitored patient behavior for the six weeks residents rocked and compared it to their behavior during six weeks when the rocking mechanism on the chairs was disabled.

During the weeks they rocked, most residents' psychological and emotional well-being improved, says Watson, an assistant professor in the University's School of Nursing and an expert in gerontological nursing research, an area where the University is ranked among the top 10 nationwide.

"Right away, nursing aides noticed the most dramatic effect: The chair served to calm someone down when he or she was emotionally upset. The aide helped the resident to the chair and got them rocking, and it calmed the patient right down."

In the study, residents rocked for anywhere from half an hour to two and a half hours each day for five days a week. While not all the residents improved, those who rocked the most improved the most, Watson says. "The more they rocked, the better they felt."

Behaviors like crying or expressions of anxiety, tension, and depression dropped in 11 patients, 10 of whom rocked more than 80 minutes a day. Such behaviors fell anywhere from slightly to almost one-third.

Several patients also requested less pain medication during weeks they rocked, Watson says; generally, those who rocked the most asked for pain medication less often, ranging from a very slight reduction to two or three fewer requests per week. Patients who rocked less asked for at least as much pain medication, and sometimes more.

Zealous rockers also improved their balance, a huge concern among the elderly population, where a fall often leads to drastically scaled-back quality of life. Watson says it's possible that the gentle rocking motion helped stimulate the residents' vestibular system, which helps maintain balance.

Rocking Chair



Literature

Residents used platform-style rocking chairs that work like conventional rockers but have a super-stable, immobile base and move back and forth very easily. Aides gradually introduced residents to the chairs, encouraging but not pushing residents to rock.

Watson's co-investigators were Mary Hauptmann, director of nursing at Kirkhaven, and Carol Brink, associate professor of clinical nursing at the University. Also taking part were Bethel Powers, associate professor of nursing; Eileen Root Taillie, project director; Margaret Lash, project nurse; and nurse researcher Thelma Wells, formerly of the University and now at the University of Wisconsin.

Watson says that nursing home staff and loved ones of residents who seem happier and less anxious have been very interested in the research. She says rocking-chair therapy could become an important treatment tool for the approximately 1.6 million people in U.S. nursing homes, more than half of whom suffer from some form of dementia.

"Rocking provides a worthwhile, mild form of exercise for these people," says Watson. "It would be difficult to take every patient for a walk, for instance, but residents can rock themselves, and many are happy to do so, given a little encouragement. This is an easy step to improve the quality of life for people in nursing homes."

Glider chairs are now commonly recommended by health officials for people with anxiety, high blood pressure, back injuries, chronic back problems and pregnant women.

From an article in Furniture Insider:

As science is beginning to discover, the use of rocking chairs has clear-cut health benefits. In babies, rocking recreates the soothing rhythm of being in the womb. For older folks, rocking stimulates blood flow and facilitates the gentle, rhythmic contraction and relaxation of back muscles.

Passive Aerobic Exercisers

Using a Passive Aerobic Exerciser helps improve circulation and cell oxygenation just as aerobic exercise does, but without raising blood pressure or heart rate. Daily use improves the body's metabolism, helps align the spine, stimulates the immune system, releases muscle tension, and gently manipulates the internal organs. Many users report increased energy and rapid relief of stress and tension; also many individuals comment on relief of chronic back or neck pain within a matter of days.

Increased oxygenation of the blood takes place due to lateral flexing of the spine, which stimulates the autonomic nervous system to open the bronchioles. Once there is increased

Rocking Chair



Literature

oxygenation, the circulation automatically increases to pick up the additional oxygen.

Benefits of Passive Aerobic Exercisers:

Better stamina

Stress Reduction

Relief from back pain

Improved lymphatic drainage

Reduce overall body weight

More energy, a greater sense of well-being

Stronger and more limber spine and joints

Firming and toning of thighs, hips, buttocks

Sounder and more restful sleep

Greater ease in getting going in the morning

Stronger immune system - fewer or no colds

Alleviation of many stress-related conditions

Improved circulation of the blood

Improved function of the internal organs

(From the web site for a Chi Machine, a device that rocks the lower body)

Benefits:

1. **CELLULAR ACTIVATION.** Massage stimulation to the sympathetic nervous system opens up the bronchial to provide maximum oxygen access to the lungs. Simultaneously the blood flow to and from the lungs is increased, enhancing oxygen exchange from the lungs to the blood and therefore to the body cells.

2. **SPINAL BALANCING** With the body relaxed in the lying position, the massage unit will influence a correction to certain misalignments. Such corrective action can in turn cure or alleviate complications arising in vertebral joints from certain spinal misalignments.

3. **IMPROVING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM.** These Chi Type Machines stimulate globulin production which increases the immune system's defense capacity, thereby providing greater freedom from disease.

4. **BLOOD PRODUCTION.** Blood is produced in the spleen and spinal bone marrow. The massager's action on the spine stimulates the sympathetic nervous system which increases spinal 'marrow' blood production. Any form of anemia can be benefited by this massage action.

5. **RESTORATION OF BALANCE TO THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**

If the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems fail to function properly, insomnia, excessive dreaming, digestive problems, stomach pain, palpitation, anxiety, constipation and many types of aches as well as mental stress may surface. The massager can restore vital balance to the nervous system and alleviate such conditions.

6. **EXERCISING INTERNAL ORGANS.**

Western medical science is beginning to consider ancient eastern traditions that focus

Rocking Chair



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healing and good health on a life force energy which flows in channels though all living forms. Acupuncture and associated therapies are being increasingly used by western practitioners to 'invigorate' the life force to restore health. The Chinese refer to this energy as 'Chi'. The Chi Type Machine will aid in unblocking the 'Chi' pathways and ensure maximum flow of this healing source through all body organs, thus improving or restoring normal functioning.
