

Sunday, Jan. 21, 2007

Hello everyone,

A great meeting yesterday! I was happy to see you all there, and we all got our batteries recharged for another month.

NEW FACES

Welcome to two Sues yesterday: Susan Anderson and Sue Phillips. Susan's daughter Sherri was also there. These women shared their stories with us and revealed astounding courage and strength in the face of their devastating injuries. We're all pulling for you both! We've been there, we're still there, and we admire your grit and dedication. Hope to see you again!

SAD NEWS FROM SHARON

Sharon Leitheiser's brother has experienced a stroke, a hemorrhagic stroke like hers only in his brain stem. He is in critical condition as the doctors try to stop the bleeding. Our hearts go out to you and your brother, Sharon. I will keep the group posted as news develops.

FEATURED SPEAKER

LaTheena Thomas from Northstar Neuroscience gave a presentation on their research program being conducted at Swedish hospital. This research involves surgically implanting a small patch on the surface of the brain, which is stimulated electrically while rehabilitation exercises are being performed. The researchers report a 30% improvement relative to rehab only by using this technique.

- Northstar Neuroscience first began in 1998 as a partnership between a neurologist and an engineer.
- There have been 97 patients in the trial so far.
- To be considered for the study, the stroke must have been ischemic (not hemorrhagic), the patient must have partial use of the hand, be over 21, and have no history of seizures. The stroke must also have been cerebral, or in the upper portion of the brain.
- Hemorrhagic stroke patients may be considered at some future date.
- If accepted, you may be placed in a control group which receives rehabilitation but no implant, or you may receive the same rehabilitation with the implant and stimulation.
- The study lasts for 6 weeks, and the implant is removed afterward. There are rehab sessions 3-5 days each week, each lasting 2.5 hours. There are also four follow-up visits after completing the therapy.
- The patch is placed on the surface of the brain, and a cord passed down through the neck to a pacemaker-like device implanted just under the skin in the upper chest. A therapist activates the stimulation externally with a control wand, while hand and arm exercises are being performed.
- There are almost no reported side effects while the stimulation is underway.
- The study involves only the hand and arm, but patients have reported leg improvement too.

I picked up extra brochures from the presentation, and you can also contact Northstar Neuroscience at 888-546-9779 or www.northstarneuro.com.

Many thanks to LaTheena for the excellent presentation!

APHASIA CLINIC

Cathy from Nancy Alarcon's Speech department at the UW (sorry, I didn't get her last name), gave a brief presentation on an upcoming aphasia clinic this summer at the UW. She left packets of information and signup sheets, and I have some left over if you're interested. Nancy will also be visiting us in March to talk about this clinic.

MIKE GORDON'S EXERCISE REGIME

Mike showed us an ingenious way of stretching and strengthening the large muscles of the legs. These muscles are essential for endurance, especially during long periods of travel with walking like he recently returned from. Mike's exercises use cheap, light, and strong materials which are readily available and pack easily for travel, and show his typical clever ingenuity. He said the total cost was about \$11, and he is willing to pick up the materials from his local Ace Hardware at cost if anyone is interested. Call him at (206) 527-0877 if you are. Mike is very impressed with the Maple Leaf Ace Hardware in the Roosevelt district, incidentally: (206) 522-3324.

Several of us took photos of Mike using his equipment, and if one of the shutterbugs sends me the pictures I will distribute them and make them available on our Yahoo group website.

Thanks a million Mike! This is great practical information. Anyone else have tips or techniques they want to share?

NATIONAL APHASIA ASSOCIATION

Valerie Boen pointed me to a great website a little while ago: www.aphasia.org with much information and links for aphasics. I urge you to check it out if you're interested.

WATER THERAPY

Several people attested to the benefits of warm-water resistance therapy. This can be as simple as walking in the shallow end of a swimming pool or as dedicated as visiting the Aquatic Center in Bellevue where they have a special pool and therapists for the procedure. Don your swimsuits and jump in, gang!

OUR LIBRARY

Duane Retel, our group librarian, is keeping track of any material you want to lend or borrow. This includes books, videos, tapes, DVDs, etc. He has this all organized on a sheet, and will be circulating that each meeting. If there is anything you want to borrow or to lend, contact Duane at 206-772-5477 or dr_leterwood@comcast.net.

WRITE DOWN YOUR STORIES

I'm gathering everyone's stroke story to compile into our own record book. We have enough remarkable experiences in our group to fill an encyclopedia! When you get a chance, write your story up in a few pages and get it to me. This is great practice for language abilities, too.

Next month Mike Gordon is going to share some memory-improvement techniques with us, and we'll have a long-overdue round table discussion where we can all share our stories. Take care till then.

Gerrit