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# Mobile Physical Therapy

## February 2011

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## --Mobile PT Attends Geriatric Care Symposium at Wash U.

Mobile Physical Therapy attended the Saint Louis Times Geriatric Symposium held on the campus of Washington University January 7, 2011. The topic was Healthy Aging: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. The symposium's keynote speaker was the Director of the CDC's Healthy Aging Program. Other local speakers covered healthy aging as it relates to the different areas of our lives, including spiritual, social, cognitive, and physical dimensions. This conference provided a comprehensive view of the different ways areas of our lives change as we age. Great Information!

## --PT Tips: Home Safety Checklist



You can download a home safety checklist for fall hazards by [clicking here](#). The checklist includes valuable information on how to prevent falls by making you home safer.

**Question:** My mom uses towel racks to balance or grab onto while getting in or out of the bathtub shower. Is that safe?

**Answer:** Towel racks may not be mounted well enough to support a person's body weight. Consider installing grab bars in appropriate places. Grab bars are made and anchored to support a person's body weight and can prevent falls.

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insurances.

**Question:** Some chairs and couches are harder to get out of than others. Any ideas on how to make this easier?

**Answer:** Avoid lower surfaces. Higher chairs and couches are easier to get in and out of. Consider chairs with arm rests. You can buy raisers to put under chair or couch legs to increase the height. Even an inch or two will make a really big difference in how easy it is to get in and out..

## --Client of the Month: Bessie

Meet our patient of the month, Bessie. Bessie is 87 and lives in Florissant. Bessie was having leg pain and some trouble getting around. She was walking, but it was slow and a little unsteady. Going outside and getting in and out of the car started to become more trouble than it had been before. Even so, she made it to church almost every Sunday.

Bessie wasn't sure she needed therapy, and didn't really like to exercise. She thought therapy would be painful, and probably wouldn't help that much. But, after more urging from her family and friends, eventually she (reluctantly) agreed to give it a try.

Using objective testing, the therapist was able to show Bessie how she was doing with her balance and walking at the first visit. Common difficulties for older adults with painful legs include getting in and out of a chair without using their arms, reaching outside of their "base of support" and slow walking speeds.

The therapist measured Bessie's balance progress using the Berg Balance Scale--a common assessment for older adults. It measures the ability to keep balance in variety of everyday tasks. Her gait speed was also measured. (For more on measuring gait speed, [click here.](#))

Bessie participated in PT twice a week for two months. She worked on strengthening, balance, and fast walking. Bessie worked hard and did great! The exercises were hard but not painful. She had great results! She improved her balance and lowered her fall risk from 91% to 33% and more than doubled her normal and fast walking speeds!

Check out the steady improvement in Bessie's test scores over time by [clicking here.](#)

Thanks Bessie, and Congratulations on all of your hard work!

## --Geriatrics Section of the APTA



The Section on Geriatrics supports those therapists, assistants, and students that work with an aging population in roles of advocacy, direct patient care, consultation, supervision, and education. The Section on Geriatrics was formed in 1978 to address the needs of the physical therapy practitioner working with

the aging client. The Section represents and serves over 5,000 members with a wide array of services and benefits.

## --Powering Up--High Velocity Exercises for Older Adults



The concept of power training is linked to the well-known physics formula that power equals force multiplied by velocity. Traditional strength training exercises require people to perform a certain number of repetitions at a particular weight, or force. This kind of exercise builds power, but the level of power increases when the same exercises are performed at a

higher velocity.

Building muscle power to perform tasks quickly is vital for older adults. Life activities such as climbing stairs, crossing the street, getting out of a chair or catching oneself when falling require high-velocity muscle action.

With power training, you are not only making muscles stronger, but you are also improving neurological control of the muscle. You are teaching the muscle to respond more quickly. If someone is losing their balance, for example, the brain is trained to recruit that muscle quickly to recover.

The exercise still must be performed smoothly with proper posture and muscle control. If the patient is using weight machines, then the contraction portion of the exercise must be done quickly, but the release should be done slowly.

Power training exercises may include functional activities such as standing or walking up a flight of stairs. When using weight machines, it is light to moderate loading for one to three sets of three to six repetitions per set, according to the American College of Sports Medicine. Therapists should spend the first week or two ensuring that the patient has proper form, and then asks the patient to increase the speed of the task over time.

You don't do power training the first session. First you want to do the activity at a slow speed with good form and posture.

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