

# Physiotherapy: It really does keep you moving for life!

by Anne Harris, MSc(PT)

Like many student physiotherapists, I went into my first year of school confident that I would work in private orthopedics physiotherapy. Having participated in competitive sports since high school, I was exposed to the world of physiotherapy at an early age. However, my experience with sports physiotherapy gave me a limited concept of other practice areas. I remember being perplexed when I was required to buy a stethoscope for my first year of school; I was confident this piece of 'medical' equipment would collect dust on my shelf in the years to come.

In fact, my journey has taken me far from what I had envisioned, and has put my stethoscope to use on a daily basis! Through student placements, casual work, and a rotating position in acute care at a general hospital, I developed an interest and passion for neurology. I have been fortunate to be involved in this field for the past few years in a variety of public practice positions, including acute spine and acquired brain injury rehabilitation. I also trained as a Hatha yoga instructor and have recently been integrating this into my work with people with neurological conditions.

My first exposure to the role of physiotherapy in neurology was a position on an acute spine unit. Initially, I felt overwhelmed but also intrigued and excited. With a diverse patient population, skills from each of the major areas of physiotherapy are required.



Anne Harris assesses postural alignment

Currently, I am working at GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre on the Acquired Brain Injury inpatient unit. I am able to build on the knowledge I gained working on the spine unit while continuing to develop my skills. The atmosphere supports continued learning, with collaboration among team members an integral part of our daily clinical work.

Working in public practice has given me a unique perspective and insight. Helping patients prepare for discharge often highlights gaps in community services for this population. Many of these individuals were previously active in leisure pursuits, but are no longer able to find suitable activities. In the fall of 2011, I joined the team at Neuro-Ability, a private practice in Vancouver dedicated to best practice in neurological rehabilitation. Along with Jean Cremin, a neurological physiotherapist who is a trained Pilates

instructor, we lead group-adapted Yoga-Pilates classes. There was overwhelming interest in the classes as they offered a unique opportunity for people with neurological conditions to be active and involved with their peers. As one of the participants remarked: "After my stroke I had tried to resume 'normal' yoga classes but found the pace too fast. Many of the instructors I approached dismissed the idea of me doing yoga. Consequently, I was delighted to hear of these classes." (C.C.) The classes will be offered again in February 2012.

If I had to predict future trends, I anticipate maintaining a position in public practice while pursuing other interests. For example, I see the potential to combine my past experience in competitive sports with my current interest in neurological physiotherapy to work with athletes with disabilities. I also look forward to growing and developing the adapted classes at Neuro-Ability to best meet the needs of this population. *In addition to working in the areas of brain and spinal cord injury in the hospital setting, Anne teaches adapted group exercise classes with a focus on yoga principles at Neuro-Ability. She also volunteers her time with the College of Physical Therapists of BC. And although she is no longer a competitive athlete, Anne is very active in yoga, salsa dancing, swimming, cycling and volleyball. For more information on her practice areas, please contact Anne at: [anne@neuro-ability.ca](mailto:anne@neuro-ability.ca)* 