New program improves quality of life for Parkinson’s patients

“I feel like I’ve been given part of my life back,” says Mike Hendrickx.

The 62-year-old retired dairy farmer recently completed a program for Parkinson’s patients offered at Perham Health. After over a decade of watching his health gradually decline from the disease, Hendrickx is grateful to once again complete everyday tasks that had become impossible.

“About 14 years ago I started having a tremor in my right hand,” Hendrickx says, explaining how he first discovered he had Parkinson’s disease. “At my yearly physical my doctor noticed that my hand was trembling and referred me to a neurologist.”

He spent the following years of his life visiting a neurologist once a year and watching his health decline. Then, during a neurology appointment at Sanford Health in Fargo last year, Hendrickx first heard about the LSVT LOUD and LSVT BIG programs.

“LSVT stands for Lee Silverman Voice Treatment,” explains Pete Anderson, physical therapist at Perham Health. “LSVT LOUD was created for patients with Parkinson’s disease to build their strength of speech, essentially increasing the volume and their range of tone. LSVT BIG was then created using the same concepts of amplitude to treat the motor problems that many patients have.”

Anderson is specially certified for the LSVT BIG program. Laura Nyhus, speech language pathologist at Perham Health, is certified with LSVT LOUD for speech therapy. In December 2014, Hendrickx started working with Anderson and Nyhus for the intensive four-week program.

All LSVT LOUD and LSVT BIG patients are seen in one-hour sessions, four days a week for four weeks. Patients learn many valuable exercises during these sessions at Perham Health’s Nelson Therapy Center. The exercises are then continued independently by patients at home.

“You get out of it what you put into it,” Hendrickx says of the program. “I was able to get better balance and I can walk up stairs now without needing to use the handrail. My movement is improved overall.”

Perham Health’s LSVT BIG program focuses on improving the amplitude of movement. Parkinson’s disease causes the brain to send an inaccurate message to the muscles, resulting in small and slow movements. People with Parkinson’s disease feel and believe that their movements are of normal proportion when they are not. LSVT BIG training teaches patients to once again use normal size movements by focusing on very large amplitude activities.

Patients are encouraged to complete seven predetermined exercises, in addition to working with a physical therapist on specific activities that are a challenge for them. If a patient does not have therapy on a given day, he or she completes the exercises twice at home. Gait training is also used to improve the patient’s speed of movement, strength, balance and fall risk, cardiovascular endurance, and

Pete Anderson (right), physical therapist at Perham Health, leads Mike Hendrickx in a series of physical therapy exercises designed to assist Parkinson’s patients in regaining their mobility. This specialized LSVT BIG treatment is now offered through Perham Health’s Nelson Therapy Center.
mobility. This helps to decrease the stiffness that is very common with patients with Parkinson’s disease.

“Mike’s areas of difficulty and concern included his walking speed, writing skills, fine motor activities like putting on a belt and buttoning shirts, and his ability to coordinate movements such as dancing, while also being able to have his mind on a conversation at the same time,” Anderson notes.

“As we worked on these specific skills, Mike showed great improvement in each area. He was able to drastically reduce the amount of time many of these activities took him. One important skill he regained was the ability to write checks. His writing had become very small and difficult to read, making it a challenge for him to write.”

Regaining his ability to dance was another priority. Hendrickx and his wife, Jean, enjoy dancing together. Jean’s younger brother is getting married in August and the two are hoping to be able to take to the dance floor at the upcoming wedding.

While LSVT BIG focuses on helping patients improve their movement, LSVT LOUD focuses on improving vocal loudness by stimulating the muscles of the voice box (larynx) and speech mechanism through a systematic hierarchy of exercises. Focused on a single goal “speak LOUD!” – the treatment improves respiratory, laryngeal, and articular function to maximize speech intelligibility.

The treatment uses loudness training to bring the voice to an improved, healthy vocal loudness with no strain. It stimulates the motor system and incorporates sensory awareness training by helping individuals with Parkinson’s disease recognize that their voice is too soft, convincing them that a louder voice is within normal limits, and making them comfortable with their new louder voice. Recently, LSVT LOUD has also been successfully applied to select individuals who have suffered a stroke, have multiple sclerosis, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy.

“One of the most impressive changes I’ve seen in Mike is his demeanor,” Nyhus explains. “In therapy, we worked on all of these areas by focusing on speaking LOUD. Given models by the therapist, use of a voice recorder, and consistent repetitions, Mike was able to improve in all of these areas.”

“Mike’s motivation and determination made him a great candidate for the program,” Nyhus continues. “He often came to therapy excited to share that he was able to cheer at his son’s basketball game or that people were not asking him to repeat himself or saying ‘huh?’ when he was talking. With Mike’s increase in confidence came an increase in his participation in conversation.”

Family and friends immediately noticed this boost of confidence. “I remember family members commenting about how they could understand him so much better,” recalls Jean Hendrickx. “Overall, he even just looks a lot healthier now. He’s able to socialize and visit with friends a lot more. It’s great to see him engaged in conversation rather than sitting back and just listening to everyone.”

“I’m trying to get back into the best shape I can to try to slow the progress of the disease,” Mike Hendrickx acknowledges. “If I would have done some of these exercises during the first couple of years of being diagnosed with Parkinson’s, they probably would have helped me even more. I would highly recommend the program to anyone else with a similar situation as mine.”

Hendrickx will return to Perham Health this July for a 6-month checkup to determine if he has maintained his improved level of movement or if he needs a touch-up course of therapy. The progressive nature of Parkinson’s disease means that he will need to continue to work on the LSVT BIG and LOUD exercises. Hendrickx says he just works hard and tries to keep a positive attitude.

“One of the most impressive changes I’ve seen in Mike is his demeanor,” Anderson confirms. “Mike began to have much more confidence and pep in his step as he improved throughout the course of care. This was extremely impressive and heartwarming. On the final day, he told Laura and I, ‘Thanks for giving me part of my life back.’ That is something I will never, ever forget.”

Hendrickx is grateful not only for the positive results he was able to achieve, but also for the quality of care he received at Perham Health. “I had a really good time working with both Pete and Laura. They are both very professional,” he says.

“I am glad they offer such a great program here. I have achieved even more than what I expected.”
Help Perham Health save lives
Perham Health joins campaign to register organ, eye, and tissue donors

Over 123,000 people are waiting for an organ. Twenty-one people die each day waiting for an organ. One organ donor can save up to eight lives.

Recently, Perham Health joined other area hospitals in the National Hospital Organ Donation Campaign. The goal of the campaign is to register 100,000 new donor designations by May 2015. Every day new people are added to the national organ transplant waiting list of people whose lives depend on an organ transplant. This week, more than 100 of them will die because not enough organs are available. Thousands of others whose lives would benefit from the gift of eye and tissue donation continue to wait and hope.

Perham Health requests the support of our employees, patients and their families, and the extended community, requested Sonda Tolle, vice-president patient services for Perham Health. “We are asking our entire hospital community to help with the critical need for organ donation.”

Don’t miss your opportunity to be involved. As a first step in Perham Health’s commitment to this important campaign, we urge you to register your generous decision to be an organ, eye, and tissue donor. To learn more about donation and to sign up as a future donor in Minnesota’s registry, please visit www.organdonor.gov. By taking a few minutes to register, you ensure that your desire to give this gift is officially recorded. You may someday be able to give the priceless gift of life, sight, and mobility to another.

Get the facts
Perham Health partners with Alzheimer’s Association and Family of Glen Campbell

Are you or someone you know living with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia? Or, perhaps you are interested in learning more about memory loss? Perham Health is pleased to have partnered with the Alzheimer’s Association and the family of Glen Campbell to bring a free education series that tackles the most common challenges faced by people with dementia and their care partners.

Five events designed to help people gain more information about dementia and how to navigate the challenges that may accompany this disease will kick off with a showing of the film, Glen Campbell – I’ll Be Me, a portrait of the life and career of great American music icon Glen Campbell and his journey with Alzheimer’s, diagnosed in 2011. The film chronicles his desire to live each moment in the present while preparing for the future. The Comet Theater in Perham will host the free showing on Sunday, April 12, at 3:00 p.m.

A four-part education series follows the showing of Glen Campbell – I’ll Be Me. Experts in memory care will cover a variety of topics that will help those with memory loss and provide caregivers with valuable assistance in caring for loved ones.

“Get the Facts” Dementia Education Series

- Know the 10 signs: early detection matters (CEU available)
  April 28, 2015
  Presenter: Jess Steinbrenner, MSW LGSW
  Western Minnesota Program Manager, Alzheimer’s Association MN ND Chapter
- Physician and patient/family perspectives: Diagnosis, treatment and living life well
  May 26, 2015
  Presenter: Dr. Jane Winston
  Family physician/geriatrician, Perham Health
  Featuring a panel of local individuals and families living with dementia
- After a diagnosis: enhancing your emotional wellness
  June 23, 2015
  Presenter: Heidi Haley-Franklin, MSW LICSW
  Vice President Clinical Services, Alzheimer’s Association MN ND Chapter
- Effective communication strategies: tips for communicating and connecting in all stages (CEU available)
  July 28, 2015
  Presenter: Gretchen Dobervich, BSW LSW
  Vice President – North Dakota, Alzheimer’s Association MN ND Chapter

This program is funded through a grant from the Department of Human Services and the Alzheimer’s Association. The education series will take place at Perham Health in the St. James meeting room (upper level). Registration is not required and is open to families and to professionals.

For additional information or questions, call Jess Steinbrenner at (218) 998-3603 or Sue Sailer, Perham Health Social Services Director, at (218) 347-1887.
Men’s Night

Tuesday, April 14
5-7:30 p.m.
The Cactus
Fort Thunder Road, Perham

• Health Screenings
• Educational Exhibits
  • Chair Massage
  • Light Meal
• Door Prizes and More!

Event for men 18 years or older

For more information or to register, please call (218) 347-1640 or email information@perhamhealth.org

FREE ADMISSION

Guest Speaker - Adam Thielen
Minnesota Vikings’ wide receiver and Detroit Lakes, Minn., native.