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GENERAL COUNCIL OF PHYSIOTHERAPY OF SPAIN

Therapeutic golf is a ground-breaking technique developed by Mr. Félix Fernández Peinó, a physiotherapist born in Lugo (Spain), and his team, all working in Fisioterapia Ronda, a clinic owned and managed by Mr. Fernández. Such technique may be very effective for disabled people. The objective of this therapy is to give the maximum independence to the patient in the process of execution of certain movements that require a higher control due to an affectionation of his or her nervous system or locomotor system. The most important issue is that the physiotherapist performs a good evaluation of the patient's capabilities and neuromotor skills. The patient, though, needs to have a strong will to improve and get ahead. The benefits, according to its inventor, are immediate.



Félix Fernández Peinó is a physiotherapist and a golf amateur player. He has played golf for several years. In 2007 he was playing golf as he was thinking about how stimulating a hemiplegic patient so as to work a bit more on the upper limb and trunk. Suddenly, he realized that a progressive adaptation to certain movements typically performed in the golf practice could be useful under the supervision of a professional physiotherapist. "The first thing I did was to comment this idea to my staff so we began to work on the

development of the Therapeutic Golf ©. Later on, I asked my staff to make a selection of patients who might adapt well to this program according to their affectionation degree and independence."

According to Mr. Fernández, the investigation about this therapy began in the very moment that his patients stepped on the putting-green and tried to grab the golf club so as to execute the swing. It was impressive to see how some of them let go of their sticks and crutches only to change them for the golf club. It was fantastic to see these patients concentrate on the specific movements that they were asked to perform. After that, in our clinic, we assessed whether some change of postural neurocontrol had occurred, among other aspects.

In theory, this physiotherapist and his staff attempted to apply the Therapeutic Golf © to patients with brain damage, Guillain Barré syndrome and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), but currently, they have added on other diseases such as cervical plexus injuries to gain motor control and even politraumatisms. As a positive aspect, the staff don't discard treating other kinds of pathologies.

According to the creator of this technique, Therapeutic Golf © was put into practice for the first time at the Golf Club of Lugo. This technique will continue to be developed in this course periodically. Nevertheless, the Mr. Fernández states that, due to the increasing interest in this therapy, that can be soon extended to Madrid and Andalusia, even in Italy, more specifically in the city of Raffael (Urbino), where his Italian colleague Fillipo Mechelli intends to practice it under the guidance of Mr. Fernández. "But this is only the beginning. I hope this can be done anywhere in the world", the Spaniard foresees.

The coordination movements, distance calculation and new goals and own visual objectives of golf allow the nervous system to work and be stimulated. "This way, we can work and stimulate the affected areas at a neuromotor level. We also stimulate the capabilities and skills needed by the patients improving those difficult aspects of the standard clinic in the clinic" Mr. Fernández asserts. The ideal situation would be for the people that benefit from this therapy could practice it once a week or fifteen days.

Once the staff of Fisioterapia Ronda tested that the therapy was really working, they became aware of the importance that it could have for many people that suffered from similar conditions. In fact, many Spanish physiotherapists, as well as some associations of brain damage, contacted this Spanish clinic to find out more about this program. "The future projection of Therapeutic Golf© is huge if we get the necessary support, although there are some difficulties such as the transportation and others. Nevertheless, this team is trying its best to implement this project as well as extend it. The impact has been enormous and there is a lot of demand from many different places" –Mr. Fernández says.

Due to this ground-breaking project, the staff at Fisioterapia Ronda have already contacted other Spanish physiotherapists. Some universities have also shown their interest in this therapy. Moreover, this therapy has been broadcast by the Spanish media, such as the National Spanish Television. Nevertheless, "it is necessary for communication media as such spread this therapy to all our colleagues and those affected by these diseases", Mr. Fernández adds.

If a disabled person wishes to benefit from this technique, he or she can be helped at Fisioterapia Ronda so that the professional evaluates which are the neurocontrol movements that the patient needs to work on in order for him or her to achieve the objectives. "There is no doubt that it is crucial to perform a good evaluation of the neuromotor capacities and skills. But also, we need to count on the patients wish to improve and get ahead", the Spanish physiotherapist says.

According to experts, Therapeutic Golf© has a positive impact at a cognitive level, and as far as coordination, cocontraction (stimulating the brain areas) and the nervous system are concerned. "In fact, it seems that this therapy helps to control the spasticity effects, it helps make the muscles more flexible, it performs a very important feedback in the process of club control as well as it helps with the execution of movements. In order to execute the golf swing, very precise motor control movements are required and this fact makes them feel more motivated.

According to the staff experience "for a moment, patients forget the harsh daily routine, not to mention the social and family pressure, as they perform an outdoors exercise in which they unconsciously are following a good treatment under the guidance of a physiotherapist.

TWO TESTIMONIALS

María Teresa Rodríguez Serrano, 63, is a teacher and she began to participate in Therapeutic Golf© back in November 2008. The reason for her to take part in this program was that she had already suffered some brain strokes and a pelvis fracture after a fall. She discovered this technique at Fisioterapia Ronda and she thinks that it is a very good treatment because "you change your lifestyle, you see yourself as useful and it gives you strength to move on. Of course, it also counts the fact that it is an outdoors experience in a gorgeous landscape." –she comments.

"I have decided to practice Therapeutic Golf© because I need a live therapy that will help my body react. With this technique I hope to consider myself a useful person and therefore get to be more independent in the future. Thanks to it, I have seen that I was able to stand up and walk, and, above all, I feel more capable for everything. In addition, my legs gained strength and resistance and I can walk better" –Mrs. Rodriguez says happily.

On the other hand, Francisco López Rego, aged 24, is a musician and, as a consequence of a car crash in March 2010, he suffers from politrauma and TBI (traumatic brain injury), as well as different fractures in his left hand. A staff physiotherapist told him about the new technique and he started to attend to Therapeutic Golf© because he thinks that this treatment is very good for his balance and his hand. "In fact, I hope that the technique will help me achieve my dream of continuing being a musician", Mr. Lopez says.



Both López and Rodríguez hope to continue participating in the Therapeutic Golf© sessions. Both patients want to encourage all those who suffer from a disease that may be improved by this project and invite them to check the benefits and usefulness by themselves.

Therapeutic Golf© is a ground-breaking technique that has just been born and it is being developed at the moment, but it promises to extend beyond our borders in less time than, probably, Mr. Félix Fernández imagines. Meanwhile, he feels very proud of what he has so far achieved and he continues to accomplish his goal: to try his best to help his patients have a better life. In fact, his utmost motivation is that of contributing to live in a better world and help to it in the best way he can do it, by practicing his profession.

If any person or physiotherapy professional may be interested in receiving information Therapeutic Golf©, please contact the Fisioterapia Ronda clinic at +34 982 242556, or send a mail to info@fisioterapiaronda.com, or visit our webpage www.fisioterapiaronda.com.