A 6 Week Balance and Gait Training Program Using the AlterG for a Patient With Cervical Myelopathy After Spinal Decompression Surgery: A Case Report

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Background & Purpose

- Spinal stenosis is the narrowing of the spinal canal which can cause radiculopathy or myelopathy symptoms due to compression of the spinal cord.¹
- About 80% of patients over 70 years old have some level of stenosis.¹
- There is limited research on prognosis for patients with cervical myelopathy and subsequent spinal decompression surgery.
- AlterG treadmill (AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill M320/ F320, Fremont, CA) is an antigravity treadmill that is considered a body weight support system used in progressive gait retraining.
- The purpose of this case report is to assess the effectiveness of balance and gait training on the AlterG in a geriatric patient with severe cervical myelopathy who underwent spinal decompression surgery.

Case Description

- 83-year-old male, retired farmer and lives with his wife in a ranch style home
- Left total hip replacement
- Right total hip replacement
- Multiple medical complications: kidney infection, Implantable cardioverter-defibrillator, blood clots, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and progression of decreased functional mobility
- Diagnosed: Cervical Stenosis with Myelopathy
- Surgery: C4 corpectomy with C3-C5 anterior fusion and posterior cervical laminectomy and instrumented fusion
- The patient started Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy services
- Patient plateaued in physical therapy
- July 2018 patient's re-evaluation
- AlterG balance and gait training program initiated
- June 2018
- Aug 2015
- Nov 2016
- 2016
- Oct 2017
- Feb 2018
- June 2018
- July 2018
- 2017
- 2016
- 2015
- 2014

Interventions

- AlterG Ambulation: Patient ambulated in the AlterG. The Alter G has multiple settings which are adjustable to patient needs and progress.
- Dual tasking: Patient ambulated in the AlterG and reached across midline for the rings and placed them on the opposite side.
- Static Perturbation: Patient stands with feet together while a therapist is guarding and another therapist pulling on resistive band in various directions.
- Dynamic Perturbation: Patient ambulated in the parallel bars without holding on and perturbations were given with a resistive band.
- Perturbation: Patient ambulated in the parallel bars and reached across midline for the rings and placed them on the opposite side.

Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Minute Walk Test</td>
<td>Contact Guard Assist/Minimal Assistance with rolling walker 1 seated rest break Total distance: 185.62 meters</td>
<td>Contact Guard Assist with rolling walker 2 standing rest breaks Total distance: 264.26 meters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berg Balance Test</td>
<td>28/56 (High fall risk)</td>
<td>35/56 (High fall risk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Second Chair Stand Test</td>
<td>6 total stands</td>
<td>8 total stands</td>
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</tbody>
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Discussion & Conclusion

- The patient demonstrated improvement in balance, gait and overall functional mobility.
- The patient improved on transfers where he only required close supervision which translated to increase independence in his own home.
- He continued physical therapy after the six-week program, to continue to address gait and balance training with the use of the AlterG.
- There is limited research on the efficacy of gait and balance training with the use of the AlterG for patients with cervical myelopathy.
- Future research should consider exploring the use of AlterG and its effects on gait and balance for geriatric patients with cervical myelopathy secondary to cervical stenosis.

Acknowledgments

The author acknowledges Matthew Somma, PT, DPT, MTC, CSCS for guidance with the conceptualization of this case report manuscript and Benjamin Kim, PT, DPT for supervision of patient care. The author acknowledges the patient for his participation in this case report.

References