

FHCN PHOTOS BY BOBBY BAISDEN



Roy is thrilled to be back doing everything he likes to do, which includes flying his own plane.

Get Back In Balance

Prevent a fall. Balance and dizziness problems can lead to falls, which are the number one cause of death from injury among patients sixty-five years and older. Fortunately, there is help.

Pilot Roy Trantham began having bouts of dizziness in November of 2008.

“It was terrible,” remembers the president of Budget Sales and Leasing. “I was getting dizzy and violently sick. I would have to lie down and keep my eyes closed for as long as seven hours, and never for less than four.

“My general physician thought I had a virus in my inner ear and that it would go away, but it didn’t. It got worse. At one point, because I was in no condition to fly my plane, I booked a commercial flight. When I got to the Miami airport, I had an attack. The MPs took me to the hospital, where I stayed for seven hours. They ran various tests but could find nothing wrong.

“By then, I was very worried so I scheduled an appointment with an ENT [Ear, Nose, and Throat doctor] who tested my hearing and suggested I return in a month. I didn’t feel I was in any condition to wait a month, so I went to a major university hospital, where they ran seemingly every test in the world on me. They found nothing.

“Finally, I was having lunch at one of my favorite local restaurants when the wife of its owner told me she had been having problems with vertigo and was treated at Gina’s Physical Therapy. She said they resolved her problem.

“I got in the car and drove straight to Gina’s.”

Nerve impairment

Gina Ricci, MS, PT, has studied at prestigious institutes around the nation, including NYU Rusk Institute, NY, and the Jones Institute, Carlsbad, CA.

“For many people, dizziness is due to a vestibular condition known as *benign paroxysmal positional vertigo*, or BPPV,” observes Gina.

The vestibular system is the sensory system in the inner ear responsible for maintaining orientation in balance, space, and posture, as well as coordinating head and eye movement, and keeping objects in visual focus as the body moves. The inner ears, the eyes, and the feet are all used to help maintain balance.

“BPPV is an inner-ear problem caused when particulate matter or calcium carbon crystals known as otoconia become dislodged,” Gina explains. “This causes an acute sense of vertigo associated with head or body movement.”

BPPV is the most common cause of episodic vertigo. Symptoms of BPPV include the spinning sensation, falling to the floor without warning, nausea, vomiting, or endlessly falling. Such symptoms can affect every aspect of life.

“Using two different diagnostic tests, we checked Roy for BPPV. First, we used an infrared camera that records eye

movements. We then performed another test known as the Dix-Hallpike, which relies on a maneuver of the head. These tests confirmed that Roy did not have BPPV.”

Once any kind of physical problem, such as BPPV, is ruled out, Gina runs a series of diagnostic tests to indicate if there is any vestibular impairment.

“The first test we perform is called a head thrust,” she notes. “During this test, we are checking for the ability to maintain focus. When there is impairment, the patient uses what is called a *corrective gaze*. They cannot stay on focus during a quick turn of the head.

“In the second test, we create an uneven surface and have our patients close their eyes so they are relying solely on their inner ears for balance. When nerve impairment is present, the patient will be unable to maintain balance.

“The third test is called the Fukudas Step test. Again, we remove input from the eyes and feet. Patients with impairment often think they are marching in place yet may have moved across the room.”

These tests verified that Roy had nerve impairment.

“There is a vestibular nerve on both the left and right side of the inner ear,” educates Gina. “These nerves communicate information to the brain about where you are in space and what muscles to contract to keep you balanced. An imbalance occurs when one nerve is communicating faster than the other.

“We use eye exercises to bombard the vestibular nerve and tone down the side that is working too strongly; it evens them out again so the information arrives at the same time and balance is restored.”

Successful treatment

Gina had Roy come in for treatment twice a week for three weeks.

“Within two weeks, I felt fine,” marvels Roy, “and I’ve been fine ever since. In fact, I believe I have better balance now than I did before the episodes began.”

After treatment, Gina retests patients and sets them up with an at-home program while the nerve finishes repairing itself.

“Vertigo and vestibular impairment can strike at any age,” points out Gina, “but it is more prevalent in the aging population both because of age-related degeneration and because, in younger people, the eyes and feet can compensate for it. However, once there is an onset of cataracts and/or neuropathy [see sidebar], symptoms of the impairment will surface.

“With specialized training in vestibular disorders and state-of-the-art equipment, we are uniquely qualified to identify the sources of our patients’ balance disorders and then determine the most appropriate therapies for them.” **FHCN**—Kris Kline



Successfully treating:

- Neck/Back pain
- Leg pain/Sciatica
- Post-surgical rehabilitation
- Shoulder pain
- Knee pain
- Osteoporosis
- Fibromyalgia
- Vertigo/Balance disorders
- Lymphedema
- Ankle pain
- Infrared/Ultrasound
- Treatments



Gina Ricci, MS, PT, earned her Master’s degree in Physical Therapy from the College of Staten Island, NY. Additionally, she has studied at prestigious institutes around the nation, including NYU Rusk Institute, NY, and Jones Institute, Carlsbad, CA. Gina has received extensive training in areas that include: manual techniques to correct for neuromuscular dysfunctions, vestibular nerve diagnosis and treatment, cervical spine role in fibromyalgia treatment, and muscle energy techniques for back and sacroiliac joint pain. Her backgrounds in mental health, aerobic instruction, and martial arts also strongly influence her treatment choices.

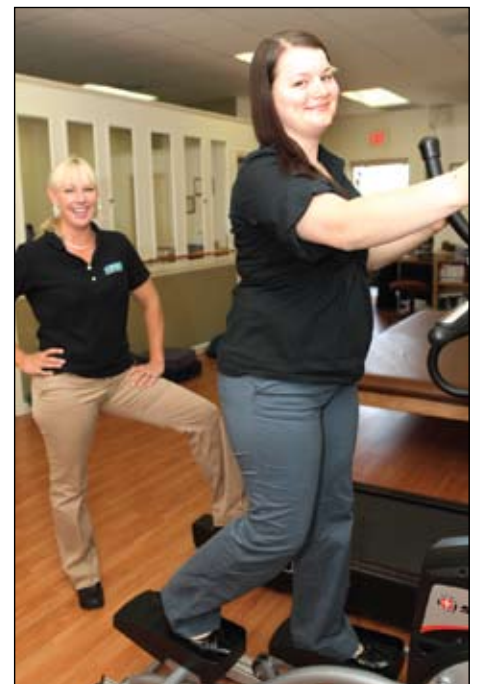
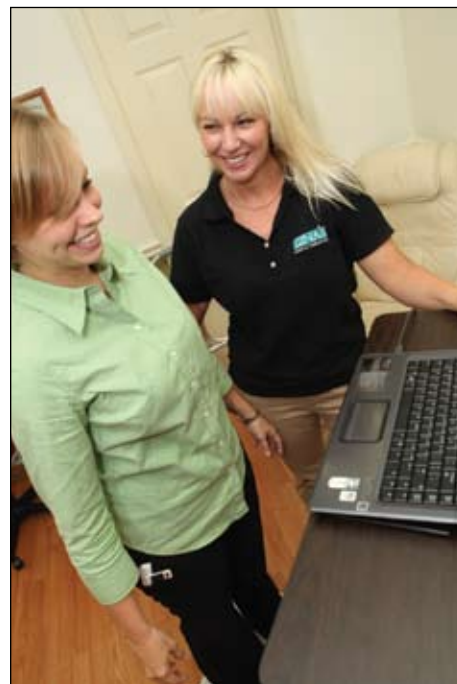
Help for patients who suffer from neuropathy

Recently developed to treat patients suffering with chronic pain or poor circulation caused by diabetes, vascular disease, or other disorders, Anodyne Therapy is an effective, drug-free, noninvasive treatment. Using a new form of infrared photo energy that has been cleared by the FDA to increase circulation and reduce pain, the system is a therapy treatment, not a medication, and consequently has no negative side effects.

“It is very comfortable for our patients,” describes Gina. “Pads are attached to their feet, and they simply sit there while it does its work. There is no feeling to it at all.”

She adds: “The program typically consists of three therapy sessions per week and lasts four weeks, followed by a home therapy program. Anodyne Therapy has been clinically proven in thirteen studies involving nearly 5,000 subjects, and clinical studies have shown a seventy-five percent positive outcome.”

For more information, please visit www.ginasphysicaltherapy.com



How to know if you have a balance problem.

Check off the items that may apply to you.

- You have a tendency to touch walls and furniture when walking around your home.
- You avoid walking on uneven surfaces like grass, sand, or ramps.
- You feel unsteady when heading to the bathroom at night.
- You feel imbalanced when you shower or wash your hair, especially when you close your eyes.
- You notice you keep your feet far apart when standing or walking.
- You feel you need to look down all the time to keep your balance.
- You have a lot of trouble negotiating curbs, steps, or stairs.

If you have checked off two or more of these statements, you should discuss this with your health care providers.

Off balance?

The staff at Gina’s Physical Therapy looks forward to helping the readers of *Florida Health Care News*. Phone **(772) 871-2866** for the facility located at **435 N.W. Prima Vista Blvd.** in Port Saint Lucie, or **(772) 223-3440** for the facility at **3610 S.E. Federal Hwy, Ste. #5**, in Stuart.