

## Metro Physical Therapy “Wii-habilitation” “We put the FUN in Functional!”

**Sherrie Glasser, MSPT, Owner and Director of Metro Physical & Aquatic Therapy** for over 30 years, is proud to announce that we have recently begun using the **Nintendo Wii** as part of our comprehensive physical therapy rehabilitation program. The Wii is a computer gaming console that offers simulated sports games (such as baseball, bowling, and tennis), specialty games like Cooking Mama: Cook Off, and a fitness/balance program, among other activities. A distinguishing feature of the Wii console is its wireless controller, the Wii Remote, which can be used as a handheld pointing device, and can detect acceleration and orientation in three dimensions. The software in the remote holds data such as the angle of movement, the reaction time, and the strength and speed of response in order to adapt the game to the player’s actions, making the Wii a fun and functional adjunct to physical therapy for children and adults of all ages.

Many adults, children and adolescents that we come into contact with for physical therapy often complain that they do not enjoy exercise, which is why they do not exercise. This inactivity frequently leads to weaknesses and muscle imbalances that can cause low back pain, arthritis, neck pain, poor posture, poor endurance, tendonitis, sprains/strains, and other issues. PT facilities utilizing the Wii have documented an increase in patient compliance, adherence to the treatment programs, and motivation to improve both their Wii scores- as well as their overall condition. In addition, therapists note that patients more eagerly anticipate their next treatment session. This is because unlike traditional interventions, Wii offers a “fun factor,” engaging the patient in a more stimulating environment where they often work through pain with greater ease and complete their treatment session without noticing the time. Clinicians also state that they find an increase in their patient’s self esteem. Certain Wii programs have the ability to track patient’s scores, providing them with a record of their own personal improvement over time. The Wii can compare patient’s scores creating a competitive atmosphere therefore patients strive to do better during their treatment.

Some of the areas that we can improve by using the Wii include:

- **Orthopedic issues:** Weakness, Tendonitis, Posture, Flexibility, Sport specific training (surgical and non-surgical)
- **Neurological issues:** Balance, Vestibular, Difficulties with weight shifting/bearing, Stroke
- **Pediatric issues:** Cerebral Palsy, Developmental Delays, Toe Walking, Torticollis

The Wii provides both visual and audible stimuli so that the patient can actually see and hear the outcome of their movements or strength and strive to do better. The sound of the bat striking the ball, the roar of the crowd, and the music all provide positive feedback to the patients when they successfully complete a task.

The Wii is not just fun and games, but also a useful tool, utilized in a sitting or standing position, to improve functional ability, postural control, and visual/spatial processing, as well as improving balance for the senior population. Activities performed during the programs automatically trigger responses (such as weight shifting) that might have taken the PT longer to demonstrate and prompt. There is a program that is right for everyone. If you can accomplish a forward motion, at any level, then you can participate! With baseball all you have to do is swing your arm-even just a little- to simulate swinging the bat. We begin each program at zero- the lowest level- so that the timing and actions required are at their most basic, so as not to discourage patients with impaired coordination and timing.

Our Physical Therapy sessions with the Wii are currently taking advantage of two games: Wii Sports, and Wii Fit.

- **Wii Sports** emphasizes movement of the upper extremities with games such as bowling, tennis, golf, baseball, and boxing.
- **Wii Fit** utilizes the Wii balance board, which is a wireless scale that detects how our bodies weight shift. The Wii Fit incorporates the use of trunk muscles and movement of lower extremities with games, such as skiing and soccer, and programs such as yoga, strength training, and aerobic exercises.

Patients who have utilized the Wii as part of their physical therapy treatment are reporting:

- Improved ROM and increased functional ability to perform activities of daily living
- Increased confidence, with patients taking charge of their rehabilitation, and focusing on improving their Wii scores- as well as their overall condition.
- Improved weight bearing and balance
- Improved trunk stability and core stabilization
- Improved posture
- Boost in patient enthusiasm, confidence, and compliance with home exercises

The physical therapy profession changes, just as technology does. Metro Physical Therapy is proud that we are bringing our treatments to the next level, combining one-on-one personalized care with the latest technology out there today.

***This sounds FUN-ctional to us!!***

Metro Physical & Aquatic Therapy is conveniently located in **Garden City, Great Neck, Roslyn, and Uniondale**. For more information, please contact our main office at **516-745-8050** or visit our website at **metropt.com**.