

# Vestibular disability and Meniere's disease

Vestibular disability may arise from vestibular disorders such as Meniere's disease, (which is idiopathic) or Meniere's syndrome, which is secondary to various medical conditions, affecting one person in every 2500 Australians of European lineage.



Dr Margie Sharpe, Accredited Vestibular Rehabilitation Physiotherapist

**BOTH OF THESE** inner ear disorders are due to endolymphatic hydrops that affects the hearing as well as the balance (vestibular labyrinth), and is characterised by fullness of the ear, episodic rotatory vertigo, fluctuating hearing loss, and tinnitus.

Other primary vestibular symptoms associated with Meniere's disease/syndrome are blurred vision, oscillopsia, disorientation, disequilibrium, gait ataxia, nausea, vomiting, sweating, tachycardia and increased respiratory rate.

Patients with Meniere's disease/syndrome may also experience secondary symptoms such as:

- Fatigue, poor concentration, short term memory loss
- Cervical stiffness and pain, and headaches
- Musculoskeletal and cardiovascular de-conditioning
- Inability to read street signs and recognise people's faces
- Falls and related injuries
- Fear of falling
- Fear of a driving accident
- Difficulty moving in darkness, e.g. at the cinema
- Imbalance in busy visual environments, e.g. at a football match or supermarket

- Socioeconomic issues
- Career changes or modifying employment
- Social embarrassment
- Decreased independence in self-care, job performance, and participation in family life
- Reluctance to participate in social and recreational activities
- Major lifestyle changes.

This constellation of symptoms can lead to a decrease in independence, employment and economic issues, social isolation, depression, diminished self-confidence and self-esteem, and interpersonal relationships being affected. This interrelationships between symptoms and disability is not to be underestimated. It has far reaching consequences for both the patient and family.

Vestibular rehabilitation strategies play a critical and important role in patients with Meniere's disease/syndrome as shown by findings of clinical studies.

Vestibular rehabilitation therapy has been shown to ameliorate the disabling effects of vestibular impairment, thereby preventing or diminishing vestibular disability in this clinical population, by improving balance, gait, dynamic visual acuity, preventing falls and related injuries, increasing the individual's independence, and improving self-care and activities of daily living.

A multidisciplinary approach is paramount to ensure best clinical practice and positive functional outcomes for the Meniere's patient. The vestibular physiotherapist needs to work closely with the ENT

specialist and/or neuro-otologist, general practitioner, audiologist, clinical psychologist, dietitian, and other health professionals who may be involved.

The Dizziness & Balance Disorders Centre Pty Ltd (South Australia and New South Wales) was formally established in 1993, is the first physiotherapy private practice specialising in vestibular rehabilitation in Australia. The Centre offers individual and group consultation, the latter being a recent initiative, Vestibular Dysfunction Exercise Groups, in response to community need.

The Academy of Vestibular Rehabilitation is the professional development arm of the Centre. It is at the cutting edge of vestibular research and rehabilitation, offering professional development programs to physiotherapists in Australia and worldwide. The Centre also offers physiotherapists the opportunity of ongoing professional development in Adelaide and Sydney. ■

**Margie H Sharpe and Anita Stacey**  
Dizziness & Balance Disorders  
Centre Pty Ltd



## The Dizziness & Balance Disorders Centre

THE DIZZINESS & BALANCE Disorders Centre is delighted to be associated with the Meniere's Support Group of Victoria Inc. which is conducting its inaugural information afternoon in Adelaide *Understanding and Living Successfully with Meniere's Disease* at the Royal South Australian Deaf Society, 262 South Terrace, Adelaide on Saturday 22 May 2004 1.00-4.45 p.m. The seminar will feature Lynn Polson author of *Understanding Meniere's Disease*, prominent ENT specialists and accredited vestibular

physiotherapist, Prof Dr Margie H Sharpe. A cost of \$20.00 includes a copy of the videotape 'Dizzy Terror – Meniere's Disease Awareness,' and afternoon tea.

For further information contact the Dizziness & Balance Disorders Centre Pty Ltd on (08) 8291 8577 or email <mhsharpe@bigpond.net.au> or <www.dizzinessbalancedisorders.com.au>.

The Meniere's Support Group of Victoria Inc. may also be contacted directly on (03) 9775 2972 or email <msgv@cinet.com.au>.

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