

SPEAK OUT!®

Speech therapy program strengthens voices in individuals with Parkinson's disease

Pike County, Pennsylvania native Joanne Muir was four years into retirement from her job as a bookkeeper for her husband's water treatment company when she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. By the time Joanne and her husband moved to Florida five years later, the disease had begun to manifest itself in a way Joanne didn't expect.

"My voice began to get very soft and weak," Joanne reveals. "I couldn't speak with any force or in a normal volume. It quickly became a problem for us because my husband is hard of hearing. I was always having to repeat myself several times to be heard and understood. It was very exhausting and frustrating."

Joanne's frustration is not unusual. According to the Parkinson Voice Project®, a nonprofit organization created to aid

sufferers of this specific motor symptom, 90 percent of all Parkinson's patients are at risk for developing a weakened voice, slurred or indistinct speech and maybe even swallowing difficulties.



To correct the problem, the Parkinson Voice Project has developed a 12-session voice therapy program called *SPEAK OUT!* that is designed to help participants strengthen the muscles they use to speak and swallow. During each 45-minute session, participants work with a speech-language pathologist while performing a series of speech, voice and cognitive exercises.

Friendly Advice

Joanne learned of the program from a friend, and through her doctor, she was advised to visit Devang Shah, MD, at Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat. Dr. Shah specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of voice and swallowing conditions and upon first meeting Joanne he performed a videostroboscopy to view her larynx (voice box).

The videostroboscopy uses a strobe light and a high level of magnification to see the motion of the vocal folds and diagnose any growths affecting the way the vocal folds move together to make sound. Once medical clearance was obtained, she could start the SPEAK OUT! program.

"It's a pretty aggressive treatment plan," Dr. Shah reveals. "The patient and speech pathologist meet at least a couple of times a week for several weeks, and there are some very important homework assignments that are involved in the program as well."

Typical of most of the Parkinson's patients they see, Joanne also arrived at Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat last August with a slight tremor in her weakened voice. Aided by the homework she did, Joanne's 12 sessions with the speech pathologist changed all that.



Joanne Muir

"My voice is much stronger now, and my husband hears me a lot better," Joanne reports. "We don't have the communication problems we were having before, because I sound almost the way I did before I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease."

"I recommend the SPEAK OUT! program to anyone who has Parkinson's disease, and I definitely recommend doing the therapy at Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat. They're all very lovely people and so helpful. They're really great."

FHCN article by Roy Cummings. Photo by Nerissa Johnson. Megaphone graphic from kisspng. mkb



Devang Shah, MD, is board certified in otolaryngology. After receiving his medical degree with honors from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, he completed his surgical internship and residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1997. Dr. Shah is a member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery and has served as chair of the department of surgery at Florida Hospital Fish Memorial, Orange City. He coauthored several journal articles investigating the relationship between microscopic inner-ear structures and hearing function and has presented his work at research conferences.



Daniel L. Rothbaum, MD, is board certified in otolaryngology and specializes in facial plastic surgery and otolaryngology. He's a leader in balloon sinus dilation surgery in Central Florida. Dr. Rothbaum graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College in Cambridge, MA with a degree in social studies. He received his Medical Doctorate (MD) degree from Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, CT. Dr. Rothbaum completed his internship and residency training at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

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