9 May 2019

Media release

Christchurch-developed app set for international launch

A new app developed in Christchurch aims to help people with Parkinson’s manage problems with walking and balance.

Power of Rhythm (POR) will be launched internationally at the 5th World Parkinson’s Congress in Kyoto, Japan, later this month. It is a physiotherapy programme using music-based Rhythmical Auditory Cueing (RAC) to help manage gait problems such as stride length, balance and walking speed.

POR developer Christchurch physiotherapist Tara Martin says delivery of RAC is usually provided by a metronome, however studies suggested music provided a stronger “and more motivating” stimulus.

Developed in collaboration with MS and Parkinson’s Canterbury and software developer Elliot Ayrey, with video by James Shera Productions and original music by Tom Rainey, POR delivers RAC through music that is composed or selected and arranged specifically for therapeutic outcomes.

“It uses the concept of high groove music which is music that wants to make you move. It’s music that is repetitive but with subtle deviations, easy to synchronise with and is, or feels, familiar.”

She said physios might choose to use a metronome because they were unsure about finding suitable music, had to make tempo modifications or were concerned about copyright.

With POR, the type of music, the tempo and length of programme can easily be tailored to the individual client and their ability level.

Walking problems are common in people with Parkinson’s, a neurological disorder for which, at present, there is no cure. Issues with walking can lead to a slowing of gait, instability, “freezing” of gait, and falls. Research has clearly shown that exercise is crucial in the effective management of the symptoms of Parkinson’s and its progression.

Preliminary testing of POR indicates it is easy to use and quick to set up with a small sample of clients giving very positive feedback. Further testing will be done in larger clinical settings. POR is available on Google Play.

For further information on POR contact Tara Martin 021 02603382.

For further information on MS and Parkinson’s Canterbury contact Deb Parker 021 477359

* MS and Parkinson’s Canterbury has been operating in the Canterbury region for 56 years. The Society’s mission is to provide professional support and services to people with MS and Parkinson’s in Canterbury, giving them the opportunity to reach their full potential. The organisation has around 1000 clients, supporting them, their families and carers.
* In New Zealand, one person in every 500 has Parkinson’s and one in every 1,000 has MS. There is no cure for either condition.