

# Parkinson's patient gets help from department 🚗

CORNER BROOK  
CLIFF WELLS  
The Western Star

When he was told he had Parkinson's disease, a Corner Brook man had no idea how it could affect his speech.

Roy Adams, 81, has been living with the degenerative disorder that affects the central nervous system for a couple of years now.

He finds his hands shake, and his walk and speech have been affected.

"I noticed sometimes I'd go to say something and the words wouldn't come out," Adams said. "I found out through the speech therapist it was affected that way by Parkinson's."

Amanda Dalley and Angelina Burse, speech-language pathologists with Western Health, worked with Adams for about two months this spring to get his speech back up to par and help his throat to continue swallowing properly.

They helped him exercise the muscles in his throat. About 20 times each day, he says "ah" and tries to hold the same note as long as he can. He's up to about 20 seconds each. Another exercise he does is called up and down. He says "ah" at one pitch then moves the pitch up, says another "ah" at one pitch and moves the pitch down.

The workout for his voice has really helped him.

Another effect of the illness is a gradual decrease in the volume of the voice, so he and his wife Kay work on getting him to keep the volume up. She jokes that she's a good nag, but he calls her a great help.

Adams is speaking out about his illness because May is Speech and Hearing month, and that means a lot to him.

"I have to continue with what I've learned here and keep on practicing," he said. "I feel through all this the old saying is an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Down the road it could get worse. I'm not looking forward to it, but I'd be prepared."

Dalley helped Adams with one-on-one therapy, while Burse worked with Adams and about eight other clients with Parkinson's during group sessions.

Those sessions mean an awful lot to Adams. He appreciates all they've done for him and realizes he has to keep up with it daily. He might even go back next spring to keep up the good habits.

Dalley said Adams needed a lot of attention on keeping his voice loud. "My focus was increasing his breath support so he could get out higher volume," Dalley said.

"Your vocal folds are a muscle just like any other muscle in your body. They get shaky and weak just like your arms do or your legs do with Parkinson's."

"The idea is if we equip him with ways to attack this head on and keep his muscles strong, then they'll last him longer."