

Morrello clinic is proud to be supporting 'Physio in a Box', the lottery funded project by Morrello Marvels CIC. To find out more about the project, we caught up with Jon (Morrello's specialist neurophysiotherapist, and sole therapist on the project), Melissa (a beneficiary of the project) and James (son and carer of David, another beneficiary).

***Jon, can you give an overview of Physio in a Box and how Morrello as a clinic is supporting it?***

"Physio in a box is a National Lottery Funded project providing therapy support to people who have been adversely affected by COVID-19. This can include people who have been affected directly during their hospital admission or indirectly, through the recent restrictions closing community gym classes and outpatient services. The beneficiaries will be assessed by a specialist physiotherapist who will identify exercise equipment to facilitate their recovery. This equipment is then sent out in a box, allowing them to exercise at home along with online guidance and support, delivered by myself. I will change the exercises as they progress with the program.

The aim is to establish a routine of exercises, that can be continued independently and enhance physical and mental wellbeing. Morrello is collaborating with the project by funding the therapy component and has seconded me to provide the clinical support for free."

***Who is Physio in a Box for?***

"A potential beneficiary would need to be adversely affected by COVID-19, have rehabilitation needs, currently not earning, is suitable for exercise at home with support available at home if needed. The candidate does not have to have a specific neurological diagnosis but should require some (neuro)rehabilitation input such as reconditioning to exercise, balance, and agility."

***How are you finding it so far?***

"The initial thought of providing online therapy was quite daunting as physiotherapy is a hands-on profession, but it has been a fantastic experience. When you get to know the people and their stories of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected them, then seeing the difference your input can make by giving hope and positivity in what has been a very challenging year for most people, is truly priceless."

---

To get a sense of what it is like to be on the receiving end of the program, we heard from Melissa, who suffers with Dissociative Seizures.

***How has your condition affected your day-to-day life?***

"The first time I had a seizure was about 7 years ago, but I was diagnosed in January 2021. Seizures slowly became more frequent. First one or two a month then several a month and now every day. I can't walk after I have had a fit. Dissociative seizures can cause partial or full paralysis. I can't talk – I start to stutter. My hands will be shaking or locked and my feet will be bent and I can't do anything. In January, I couldn't even walk to the bus stop next to where I live because I would always have a fit. My condition is a defence mechanism, like a fight or flight response – my brain just switches off.

I used to run a club for young people – a board games and Dungeons & Dragons club. I was running it all by myself, and we were meeting and playing weekly. I was the storyteller, and I don't think I can do that anymore because I can't concentrate fully. Everyone loved it, I was looking into expanding and running something every day of the week; Dungeons & Dragons, card games, board games. It was a big passion project of mine."

***How was your experience with the program? What did you get out of it?***

“Jakko [Head physiotherapist at morrello] said he’d like to refer me to this project, Physio in A Box to support exercise at home, which he thought would be good for me. I looked at my mother worrying about how much it was going to cost, when he said it was free I just thought ‘yes please!’ It’s given me the ability to figure out when my fits are going to happen and almost how to stop them. It’s helped me in a lot of ways because I don’t end up having a fit just in the middle of nowhere. [Physio in A Box] has given me more confidence just to try things I hadn’t done in months, I actually started walking up and down my stairs again which is massive because I didn’t even sleep in my own bed for months. It’s made me feel happier in myself. I am currently suffering with depression so as good as it is it can’t fix that. But I don’t feel so pathetic anymore, so “incapable” – I’ve stopped telling myself that. I am proud of my little “victories” ...but not too proud because extreme emotion can cause another fit!”

***How did you find the virtual therapy sessions with Jon?***

“Jon is a sweetheart, honestly! He’s such a great and kind person, it’s not just business constantly - he’s not just ‘physio man’ doing his job, he cares and likes to have a chat and it just motivates you! I was lacking the motivation to do it by myself. I was scared to use the hand peddles on the bike because I was scared it would give me a fit but when Jon was coaching me through the portal it gave me the motivation to keep going.”

---

**We caught up with James to see how the project can impact a loved one:**

***James, can you tell me a little about David, your father?***

“He had a Stroke about a year ago. It was quite severe. He’s 82 but he was still working up on the roof right up until the day before he had the Stroke! It wouldn’t surprise me if he would get back on it as well... The day before the Stroke, he’d done a 12-hour shift. When he first came out of the hospital it was an adjustment for all of us. The doctors told us he wouldn’t be able to swallow, walk, or move his right arm again. He had very limited movement in his right leg. They really didn’t give us much hope coming out of hospital.”

***What sort of impact has Physio in a Box had on David’s lifestyle?***

“Having the bike at home has done wonders for him; it has brought strength back in his legs and further down the line it’s done wonders for his right arm as well. Some days I’ll tell him ‘come on we’re going on the bike’ and you’ll see his face drop because it really tires him out. But we’ve definitely all noticed a difference. It has affected him in every way, with the weeks going on I was noticing small changes like getting rid of the commode and helping him stand and then a short walk to the toilet. Now he’s going to the toilet by himself, he does everything himself.”

***Has the project had a significant impact on his mood and mental wellbeing?***

“Yeah! Not just his but mine and my mothers too. My mother still has down days but now she’s seeing the benefits. She thought she’d be stuck with the strain of his care and everything but now she’s seen that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.”