

MEETING THE DEMAND

With insurance restrictions shortening hospital stays, and medical advances lengthening the life spans of people with MS, Dr. Leiper predicts a new wave of MS patients will seek skilled care at outpatient practices specifically outfitted to treat neurological disorders.

At Body Kinetics Rehab in Annandale, Va., owner Jessica To, PT, DPT, dedicates her practice exclusively to the neurologically involved patient.

"We've been in business for 2 years," says Dr. To, whose patient base consists of post-stroke, spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury and degenerative neurological complications. While the first few months were a challenge, Dr. To is now gaining traction among physicians and hospitals in the area, who are referring greater numbers of MS patients to her practice.

She also speaks to doctors, case managers and community support groups about the value of physical therapy clinics that focus on treating patients with neurological conditions.

"A lot of people with MS know they need to stay fit, but my concern is that they may begin a program or join a community gym on their own, without consulting with a physical therapist that's experienced in neurological rehab," says Dr. To. "Many fitness professionals don't have the background to work with this population, and fitness facilities don't always have the necessary adapted equipment."

For this reason, as physicians and therapists become more aware of the benefits of exercise, community classes and specialty clinics such as Dr. To's figure to be an important emerging specialty in the coming years.

"The word is out now," confirms Dr. Brown. "Neurologists are attuned to the latest research into exercise, and what it can do. This is an important evolution for people living with MS." ■

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A CALL TO Action

Rehab experts are changing their view of exercise and MS.

BY JONATHAN BASSETT

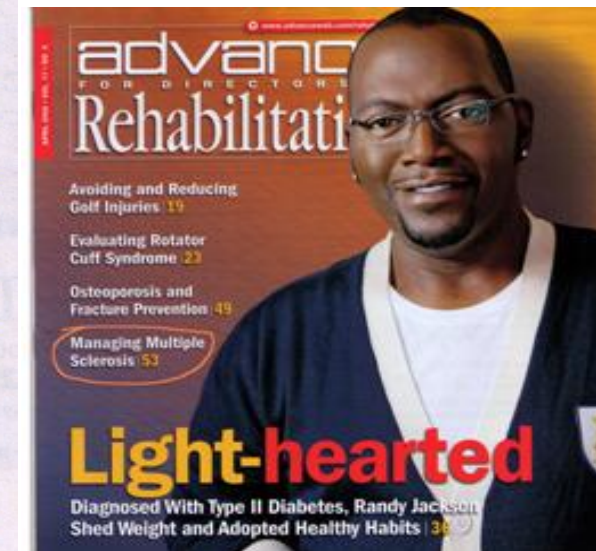
On a chilly afternoon in suburban Philadelphia, a small but committed group of locals gathers at the Health Sciences Building of Arcadia University in Glenside, Pa. Shedding their coats, gloves and hats, they're greeted by students from Arcadia's physical therapy department and escorted downstairs to a brightly lit therapy room stocked with modern equipment.

Director Carol Leiper, PhD, PT, welcomes the class, praises their fortitude in braving the elements, and leads them through a series of warm-up exercises to up-tempo Johnny Cash and Nancy Sinatra standards before breaking them out into individual activities. Today is "balance day," so most of the group works on trunk strength, core stability, stair-stepping and other challenging movements under the direction of Arcadia students, who rotate through the class as part of their curriculum.

This is the Dan Aaron "Stay Fit" exercise program for people with Parkinson's disease.



MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS



The article was in this magazine issue, with Randy Jackson on the cover! - hey, every one could use a little PT, huh? :-)