

Barrow Physician Authors New Guideline to Treat Vertigo

A new guideline developed by the American Academy of Neurology and authored by Terry D. Fife, M.D., neurologist at Barrow Neurological Institute at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, found that the best treatment for vertigo is the easiest and quickest one. The guideline on benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), an inner ear disorder that is a common cause of dizziness, is published in the May 27, 2008, issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

The disorder causes a feeling of spinning or whirling when the head is moved in certain ways, such as looking up or bending. The feeling lasts a short time but can be severe.

The guideline determined that in many cases the vertigo can be treated with simple maneuvers – a series of head and body movements performed by a doctor or therapist while the patient sits on a bed or table. To develop the guideline, the authors analyzed all available scientific studies on the topic.

"The good news is that this type of vertigo is easily treated," says Dr. Fife. "Instead of telling patients to 'wait it out' or having them take drugs, we can perform a safe and quick treatment that is immediate and effective."

The disorder is believed to be caused by loose calcium carbonate crystals that move in the sensing tubes of the inner ear. The maneuvers move the calcium crystals out of the sensing tube and into another inner chamber of the ear, from which they can be absorbed.