

Balance Opportunity

Focus on Balance? Many rehabilitation providers market similar services in the conventional physical therapy arena. Fewer focus on patients with more challenging problems.

What about patients with balance problems?

Problems with unsteadiness, falls, dizziness, and similar issues are rarely the result of a single factor or disease entity. It is intuitively obvious and threatening if you are the one with the balance problem. It can affect your daily life in countless ways, and may affect your independence, your ability to work, or to interact with your family and community. Older individuals don't need to be convinced about the threat of a balance problem; they already know of friends facing serious consequences of a fall (head injuries, hip fractures, etc.).



If you had a balance problem, would you know where to seek help?

If you are a healthcare provider, and you don't have an answer, imagine the frustration experienced by residents in your community trying to find a provider who can address the problem—or provide a solution. If specialized balance treatment is not available in your community, meeting that need may represent an opportunity for you and your organization. Balance may give you a chance to stand out in a crowded market. A well-run balance program offers several benefits for the providers:

- Competitive Differentiation. Prospective referrers and their patients are more likely to remember providers with specialized services.
- Enhanced word of mouth referrals and reputation. Enthusiastic patients who achieve a positive outcome after a frustrating search for solution tend to talk about their success—a lot!
- Cross marketing. Once you establish a positive relationship with a patient, are there other services you offer that may be of interest to them? To their families? To their communities?

How big is the market?

It has been estimated that 30% of the population over 60 will experience dizziness or a fall. Injuries from falls are a serious public health problem, and a check with local emergency departments will confirm the issue for your community. Balance problems can result from neurologic problems (including concussions), orthopedic injuries, diabetes, and the combination of several relatively minor isolated problems. For example, start with a little arthritis, add a little vision problem, then add a recent sprain or strain in the lower extremities and the result may

be a significant balance problem. There is no shortage of potential patients, but there is a shortage of specialized programs to provide a solution.

What makes balance treatment so challenging?

The balance system is complex, requiring integration of sensory information from the somatosensory system (joints and muscles), the visual system, and the vestibular system (inner ear), and the coordination of motor systems to maintain safe postural control. Disruptions of this intricate system can result in a balance problem, and the situation can be complicated if there is disruption in more than one part of this process. Add the fact that patients' adaptive responses vary widely so that individual responses to these contributing impairments may complicate the problem still further. A one-size-fits-all approach to treating these complex problems is not likely to produce optimal results. With this complex system, there is a risk of missing something in the evaluation, leading to ineffective treatment, patient frustration, diminished reputation, reduced referrals, and other negative consequences. Specialized care is not easy, but the rewards for a successful program with good outcomes can be significant.

How does specialized balance care address these problems?

The process starts with a comprehensive assessment using the best available tools. Evaluation should include as much of the balance system as possible, checking multiple sensory and motor systems. Treatment plans that focus on discrete, measured impairments are more efficient and more likely to produce an optimal result. Objective data to guide the assessment process and treatment planning can also be used to monitor patient progress, fine tune the treatment, and document effectiveness.

Does this limit your practice?

Balance issues touch a wide variety of patient groups. Successful balance centers will attract referrals from sources looking for help with more complex patient problems (neurologic, geriatric, vestibular, and more). A track record of success with challenging patients can be the foundation for growth. With increased attention to concussion in contact sports, there is a developing need for managing patients who have sustained a concussion. The additional training and clinical systems used for balance can also be applied to managing patients with concussion, and that represents a growth opportunity to attract an even larger population.

How can Bertec help?

Bertec designs and manufactures Balance Advantage® systems, a full line of clinical systems for both assessment and treatment of balance problems, using three decades of experience with high quality research instrumentation. The Bertec Computerized Dynamic Posturography system is used to provide the gold standard in balance evaluation protocols to isolate and quantify impairments that contribute to a balance problem. The CDP system incorporates Immersive Virtual Reality in its distinctive dome, using computer-generated visual stimuli both for assessment and unique training environments. The Bertec Vision Advantage™ system is designed to evaluate vision problems resulting from head movement that can cause or complicate balance performance. There are also portable Bertec systems ideal for community outreach, satellite offices, and high volume screening applications.

How do you start?

Meet with a Bertec representative. Their experience in working with successful balance centers at all levels can help you evaluate the services you plan to provide and review options for integrating balance services into your business.



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