



Lorraine Lack

“I’m glad I was able to come in here to the Eye and Ear and not have to travel to Sydney. Everybody here at the Eye and Ear have been so friendly, very nice and helpful.”

Thanks to generous funding from a Gandel Philanthropy Community Build Grant, the Eye and Ear opened the Gandel Philanthropy Balance Disorders Diagnostics—an area dedicated to a new balance disorder diagnostic and management system.

Housed in this area is the state-of-the-art \$225,000 Epley Omniax System, one of only 34 in the world and only the second in Australia. It increases diagnostic accuracy for sufferers of balance disorders, meaning shorter hospital stays and a rapid return to daily activities and productivity for the patient. The cutting-edge technology will enable the Eye and Ear to explore new treatment techniques and ensure the hospital is at the forefront of balance disorder research and diagnosis.

Helping the dizzy back on their feet

“Even though I was laying down it felt as though I had to hold on to something because everything was moving, but really it wasn’t, it was all in the head—or the ears!”

Lorraine Lack was diagnosed with Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV), the most common cause of vertigo, in early 2014.

“I felt as though I was going to fall over, the whole room including the ceiling spun around, then all of a sudden it would just stop,” Lorraine recalls.

Dr David Szmulewicz, Head of the Balance Disorders and Ataxia Services at the Eye and Ear says balance disorders are widespread and debilitating conditions.

“80% of people aged over 65 years have experienced dizziness, and BPPV is the cause of approximately 50% of dizziness in older people,” Dr Szmulewicz says.

Lorraine suffers from rheumatoid arthritis, which excludes her from undergoing traditional treatments of BPPV. She was referred to the Eye and Ear’s Balance Disorders and Ataxia Services where she saw Dr Szmulewicz.

In October 2014, the Eye and Ear launched the Gandel Philanthropy Balance Disorders Diagnostics, the room that houses the Epley Omniax System.

“Lorraine was suitable for the Epley Omniax System because some other methods of treatment had failed in the past, while others were inappropriate given her rheumatoid arthritis,” Dr Szmulewicz said.

Lorraine admits the machine was quite overwhelming.

“I was a bit sceptical at first, when I saw the machine I thought ‘Oh my God, what is that?’”

“It was a funny feeling being in the machine. After some movements I would experience vertigo, then David would bring me back up right and it would go back to normal.”

Lorraine’s vertigo has not returned after three sessions in the Epley Omniax System.

“Life is so good now, it’s lovely to be able to get out of bed, not feel dizzy and not have to be sick,” Lorraine says.

Dr Szmulewicz says thanks to the new system, patients will have an improved quality of life.

“The Epley Omniax System is an opportunity for faster diagnosis of BPPV, and it will also significantly improve treatment options available for patients, who are often forced to live with chronic untreated dizziness,” Dr Szmulewicz says.

Being the first machine of its kind in Victoria and only second in Australia means patients like Lorraine won’t have to travel interstate or overseas.

“I’m glad I was able to come in here to the Eye and Ear and not have to travel to Sydney. Everybody here at the Eye and Ear have been so friendly, very nice and helpful.”

Lorraine’s story was featured on Channel 9 news, and generated much interest in the Gandel Philanthropy Balance Disorders Diagnostics. Successful stories like Lorraine’s are thanks to the generosity of Gandel Philanthropy.

“I’m very pleased with what has happened and very fortunate and grateful to be able to have used and benefited from the machine.”