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EDITOR'S PEN

Gary Barg, Editor-in-Chief

Caregiver Thought Leader Interview: Jonathan Miller, President In-Step Mobility Products Corporation

Gary Barg: Among older adults, falls are the leading causes of both fatal and non-fatal injuries. With over 750,000 hospitalizations. This is also an issue for people living with Parkinson's, Stroke and MS. What's causing most of these falls?

Jonathan Miller: Well there's multiple things that cause neurological issues and as a result that could ultimately result in a fall. Most commonly, we deal with things that affect the brain such as Parkinson's disease and that could cause a major balance disorder. We also deal with issues like Multiple Sclerosis, where it's affecting the nerves as well as Muscular Dystrophy that are affecting the muscles, and in doing so end up with a major weakness in the lower limbs and causes a balance disorder.

Gary Barg: Your mom had a neurological disorder that left her unable to walk and it caused a major depression on her part. Tell me about that?

Jonathan Miller: When my mom was about 60 years old, Her walking ability had already been limited for many years but she was still able to function. About that time, she felt the need to find some assistance to help her walk because she was starting to get very limited at even walking around the house. She was already holding on to walls, they refer to it as wall walking, as well as holding on to people's arms or

furniture when she walked. She saw a podiatrist who recommended physical therapy and leg braces and a walker. And with all these interventions she still wasn't doing well and became very frustrated and upset. I then took an active role in seeing what I could do to help. I realize that my mother just needed something much more stable than the walkers on the market. And I figured if she could walk holding on to someone's arm or walk I would make a walker that approximates that type of balance. That was the concept of designing the U-shaped walker that surrounds her and braces her in every direction keeping her from falling.

Gary Barg: What neurological issues do you see most commonly when they seek your help?

Jonathan Miller: Our product has been known for many years to help people with Parkinson's Disease because not only is the walker stable, but we've also added an electronic feature to help people who hesitate which is referred to as Parkinson's freezing. It actually provides a cue for them to take steps and also pace themselves. So that's where our product has been used extensively. However about two years ago we introduced a new version of our walker called the U-Step 2, made for disabled people, as well as people with conditions like MS. So, we made a walker that works better outdoors and is easier to fold as well as easier to transport.

Gary Barg: As a designer and family caregiver, what would be the one most important thing you'd like to share with family caregivers?

Jonathan Miller: I think that when people have someone close to them in need and they have ideas that can be of help, they should try to develop these ideas because they could also help many other people. I'm proud that we have helped over 40,000 stay independent over the years.

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