

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****200 Belle Terre Road, Port Jefferson, NY 11777****(631) 474-6251 / (631) 476-5582 fax****Contact: Marilyn Fabbriante****Director, Public & External Affairs****NEW THERAPY FOR SWALLOWING DISORDER  
NOW OFFERED AT ST. CHARLES HOSPITAL**

**(Port Jefferson, NY) – St. Charles Hospital** has introduced an innovative new treatment for patients who suffer from dysphagia, a painful and often debilitating swallowing disorder.

Known as VitalStim® Therapy, the treatment uses non-invasive electrical stimulation to help re-educate the throat muscles needed for swallowing. Cleared for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, VitalStim® Therapy is applied externally and delivers small electrical currents to the neck to stimulate inactive or atrophied swallowing muscles. With repeated therapy, throat muscles are re-trained until the patient reaches an optimum level of swallow function.

“VitalStim Therapy is truly a breakthrough in treating dysphagia,” said Jennifer Semel, MD, Medical Director, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. “Since introducing VitalStim, we have seen some exceptional outcomes that simply would not have been possible with traditional therapies. Patients have shown dramatic improvements in their ability to swallow and have returned to a more normal diet – and a better quality of life – much sooner than we thought possible. Even patients on feeding tubes have responded well to the therapy, allowing an earlier removal of the tube.”

As many as 15 million Americans suffer from dysphagia, with one million new patients diagnosed annually. The disorder affects 50% to 75% of all stroke patients and 60% to 70% of patients who undergo radiation therapy for head and neck cancer. Estimates of dysphagia’s prevalence in such neurological diseases as Parkinson’s disease and ALS run as high as 90 percent.

The condition is especially prevalent among older adults. Studies suggest that up to 75 percent of nursing home residents experience some degree of dysphagia and that as many as half of all Americans over 60 will experience dysphagia at some point after that age. The disorder can lead to complications such as choking, bronchospasm, increased infection rate, chronic malnutrition, life-threatening dehydration, significant weight loss, physical debilitation, social isolation and even death.

For more information about dysphagia and VitalStim® Therapy, including a free question & answer brochure, please call (631) 474-6797.

St. Charles Hospital is a 301-bed community hospital with centers of excellence in rehabilitation, orthopedics and maternity. With a 100-year history of rehabilitation, the hospital continues to set the gold standard in rehabilitation services on Long Island caring for 2,500 inpatients each year and more than 100,000 patients through the nine outpatient satellite facilities located across Long Island.

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