

HEALTH ALERT!

Treatable, Little Known Condition Often Confused With Alzheimer's

(NAPSA)—Over a period of nine years, Bob Fowler, 75, a former chairman of a Dallas oil company, went from being a man who could run a multimillion-dollar company to someone who couldn't think clearly or walk without falling.

He saw several medical specialists. There was talk of Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's. Finally, after nine frustrating years, he was diagnosed with normal pressure hydrocephalus (NPH), or excess fluid in the brain, a condition that can resemble Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease. However, unlike those two diseases, NPH can be reversed or controlled with treatment.

Once Fowler was treated for NPH, he experienced an almost immediate recovery and resumed his active lifestyle.

Unfortunately, his story may not be unique. Experts estimate that 375,000 people in the U.S.—or five percent of those who think they have Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia—may actually have NPH. Many NPH sufferers, like Fowler, are either misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all.

NPH, an accumulation of excess fluid around the brain, is characterized by three primary symptoms: a magnetic gait or shuffling as if a person's feet are glued to the floor, incontinence and dementia.

"If someone is 55 or older and has any combination of these symptoms, they should see a doctor and ask about NPH," said Mark Luciano, MD, PhD, a neurosurgeon from the Cleveland Clinic



NPH affects about 375,000 people in the U.S. who may not know they have it. People with NPH walk like their feet are glued to the floor.

and an expert on NPH. "An MRI or CT scan can confirm or rule out the condition."

NPH is treated with a shunt. This tubelike device is implanted in the head to drain excess fluid from the brain to the abdomen, where it can be safely absorbed. At times, the shunt may need to be adjusted because removing too much fluid or too little fluid may be dangerous. That adjustment used to require further surgery, but now it is done less invasively with a programmable shunt. A doctor can make the adjustment simply by holding a magnet to a patient's head.

Fowler had a programmable shunt implanted and soon after that he was thinking clearly, working again, playing golf with his friends, traveling and enjoying time with his young granddaughter.

For more information about NPH visit www.lifenph.com or call 1-866-LIFENPH.