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Robotic Therapy Equipment Helps St. Luke's Patients Learn to Walk Again

SPOKANE, Wash. – St. Luke's Rehabilitation Institute, the region's largest free-standing rehabilitation provider of inpatient and outpatient services, has installed a ZeroG® Gait and Balance System, a robotic body-weight support therapy equipment designed to help people relearn to walk and gain balance. The ZeroG is being used to aid patients with conditions such as spinal cord and brain injuries, stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and even lower-extremity amputations. It is the only device of its kind in the Inland Northwest, and is expected to serve 1,000 pediatric and adult patients each year.

The ZeroG offers patients a reduced gravity-like environment, allowing them to engage in innovative physical therapies so they can practice a wide range of activities without the fear or risk of falling. Patients wear a harness that connects to the ZeroG robot as it tracks their movements from above.

"ZeroG gives our patients the safety and confidence to practice functional, real-world balance and walking activities," said Chris Clutter, director of rehabilitation services at St. Luke's. "It's not an overstatement to say that, for many of them, it will be life changing." While most patients using the ZeroG will be from the Inland Northwest, patients from as far away as Alaska, California and Montana will benefit from the new equipment.

Providence Health Care Foundation raised nearly \$280,000 to fund the cost of the equipment and associated space modifications. Major funders included the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation and the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust. "We're thankful for the many philanthropic gifts from generous individuals and organizations that made the ZeroG possible for our patients," said Clutter.

Fear of falling is one of the major obstacles to effective rehabilitation. The ZeroG essentially eliminates patient falls during therapy, increasing patient and clinician safety. Patients are able to practice walking, climbing up and down stairs, getting up off the floor, getting in and out of a chair and other everyday tasks. Accompanying software collects clinical data that tracks each patient's progress and outcomes.

About St. Luke's Rehabilitation Institute

The region's largest, free-standing Level I Trauma Rehabilitation hospital, St. Luke's provides comprehensive medical rehabilitation services for people of all ages who have experienced a stroke, spinal cord injury, brain injury, amputation or other injury or illness requiring rehabilitative care. St. Luke's is accredited by Joint Commission and Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities International. Thousands of patients choose St. Luke's for inpatient rehabilitation services at the main campus and outpatient therapy services at nine locations throughout Spokane. For more information on St. Luke's visit st-lukes.org.