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New Therapy Helps Stroke Patient Swallow

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Loch Ness Scientist, Stroke Survivor Undergoes Treatment

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BOSTON -- He wants nothing more than to find the Loch Ness Monster. But that search was put on hold because of health issues. Now he's ready to work again, thanks to a new therapy being offered in Boston. News Center 5's Janet Wu reported on the story Thursday.

There's no doubt you've seen the images.

 [VIDEO: New Therapy Helps Stroke Patient Swallow](#)

"Time magazine came out with the flipper picture in 1972," said Dr. Robert Rines, a scientist who was born in Boston, Mass. "We think this is part of the body of the animal and the flipper."

Rines devoted 40 years to searching for the Loch Ness monster.

"I'm one of the fortunate ones who have seen Nessie," he said.

But a stroke last year put his quest on hold.

"I woke up in the middle of the night and I couldn't swallow my own saliva," Rines said. "Next thing I knew, they were feeding me through a tube in my stomach."

And that's the way it was, until he started a new technique at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. Rines was one of the first patients to undergo VitalStim Therapy, an FDA approved treatment to help strengthen his swallow.

"It's called neuromuscular electrical stimulation. It's been used in physical therapy for a long time," Cynthia Wise Wagner, a speech pathologist with Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Wagner said the device uses small electrical currents to stimulate the muscles responsible for swallowing. It retrains those muscles so patients can eat on their own again. But it's hard work to train the muscles.

"I'm getting stronger and stronger fighting this electric current. Probably I won't get back 100 percent, but gee, I'm a lucky person," said Rines.

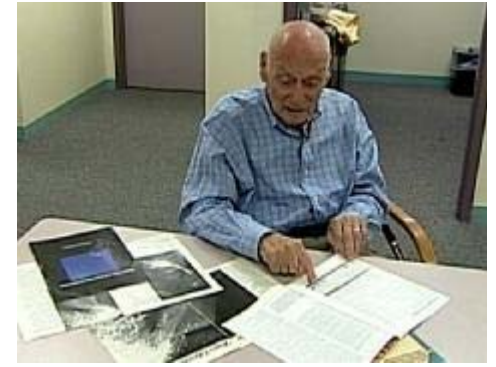
After three to four hours of therapy for eight weeks, Rines went from not being able to drink to eating a lobster dinner on his 85th birthday.

"That was our goal and by god we succeeded in that," Rines said.


In two weeks, Rines will be back to Scotland, hoping to find what's left of the Loch Ness monster.

"We may be able to recover some skeletons, and supplement the pictures we were very fortunate to take in the '70s of Nessie," he said.

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