

DANCING

as a Method to Test Gait and Balance



questions listed below while dancing with the patient. This simple system demonstrates the degree of disability.

Failure to perform any of these routines appropriately represents a problem with gait and balance. The

greater the

number of “no” responses corresponds with a greater degree of problem. The speed at which any of these dance steps is executed is dependent on the physical stamina of the patient, not the doctor. Dr. Morley assures us that he uses this test on men and women alike. He doesn’t tell us how he determines who gets to lead, but we suspect we know the answer.

We recommend that a simple circle dance with the two dancers holding hands is sufficient to answer these questions. We do not recommend the tango or the limbo! ■



Dr. John Morley has been a long-time advocate of developing geriatric assessments that are easy to use and fun to perform. Perhaps his favorite assessment is one to determine gait and balance. Dr. Morley maintains that gait and balance can easily be assessed while dancing with an older person. Dancing is more fun for both the elder and him than administering a classical gait and balance test. At Saint Louis University and at the St. Louis VA Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC), we ask the yes/no



1. Does the person follow the dance steps?

2. Is there a space between her/his feet as (s)he performs the steps?

3. Does (s)he lift her/his feet off the ground?

4. Does (s)he maintain her/his balance while dancing close?

5. Does (s)he maintain her/his balance during the turn?

6. Does (s)he turn appropriately?

Failure to perform any of these routines appropriately represents a problem with gait and/or balance.