



Stayin' alive

DAVID LAWRENCE

The candidate is retired and aged 67. He stands 1.75m and weighs 80kg. He has high blood pressure, high cholesterol, rheumatoid arthritis and a recent cardiovascular history. He has had two operations, one for back trouble, the other an angioplasty.

Since he started the Living Longer Living Stronger course he has improved his stamina and his muscles feel better. He walks for up to an hour each morning with his wife, swims sometimes twice a week, plays golf more easily and his tennis is still rubbish.

That's me.

So when we met Darryl Turner at the Joondalup Rehabilitation Clinic to be "assessed", it was hard not to miss the slightly pursed lips and a figurative shake of the head as we pursued the long and chequered history of my medical file.

There are strict rules in this program. Dr Turner insists — frequently — that you must perform only to your limit. If an exercise becomes too difficult, you must stop. Immediately.

Yet the benefits are becoming more apparent each day. I'm up to the 10th week of this program and within the first month I — and my wife — noticed an improvement in completing everyday tasks.

Lift the lawnmower, chuck it in the back of the ute. No worries. Ditto golf clubs and all manner of stuff.

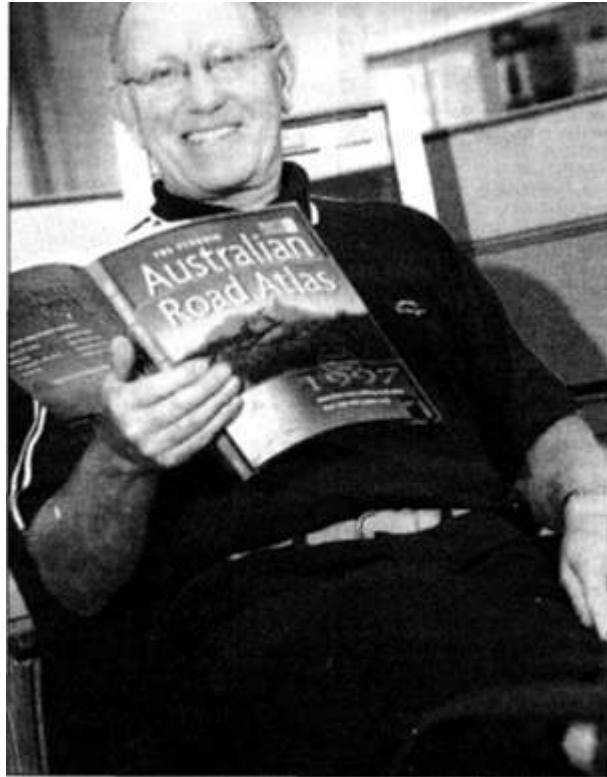
Tug the golf trolley up cardiac hill at a pace that normally would demand heavy breathing — barely noticeable.

It works like this: twice a week we turn up for an hour's exercise, which is generally split into three parts — aerobic (bikes, rowing machines, walking), isotonic (resistance work) and an exercise card that entails using weights.

One of the problems I face is that my cardiovascular history and medication have reduced my ability to get my heart rate up during aerobic exercise. So where others may get up to 160 beats per minute, I can rarely get past 100 — top whack.

The resistance and weight programs have seen an improvement in the weights that can be pushed and, together with home exercises, have improved my functioning ability — the sort of stuff you will do without thinking, bending to pick up a bar of soap in the shower, squatting to put away material in a bottom drawer, lifting heavy objects from place to place.

There's a bloke of 80 in our group. He does everything I can do and more with little apparent effort. That makes me envious of his genes. Still, we're all getting better. No sweat. And no one has carked it so far.



David Lawrence

FACTS OF THE MATTER

- Research into the LLLS program has shown improvements in leg strength measured at 33 per cent, in upper body strength (28 per cent) and back strength (40 per cent).
- Balance improved in 17 per cent of men and 20 per cent of women.
- A medical outcomes study demonstrated a 12 per cent improvement in vitality measured by energy and fatigue levels
- Women showed a 16.5 per cent reduction in limitations in their day-to-day activities.

The LLLS program is available at centres across WA. Call Council on the Ageing on 9321 2133 for details.