

# Vanita's Rehab Inc. relocates to Nelson Avenue in Melbourne — longtime physical therapist Vanita Gaglani a specialist in treating overactive bladder syndrome — uses pelvic-floor muscle training

By Ken Datzman

Urinary incontinence, or involuntary loss of bladder control, is a condition that affects millions of people, men and women alike. Yet many people are too embarrassed to talk about this common symptom that can create havoc on an individual's quality of life.

Instead, they suffer in silence and many times have to deal with loss of self-esteem, sleep deprivation, and even depression.

"This is something that people simply do not want to discuss because of the embarrassment associated with it," said physical therapist and small-business owner Vanita Gaglani, who specializes in treating overactive bladder syndrome at Vanita's Rehab Inc.

"Incontinence is the number-two cause for nursing-home admissions after hip fractures. But it really impacts a wide spectrum of people. Even marathon runners and swimmers have this issue, as well as women of child-bearing age. And most men become incontinent later in life because of an enlarged prostate," she said.

There are two types of incontinence, and more than 25 million Americans, young and old, are affected. The types are "stress" incontinence, which is leaking urine during activities such as walking, aerobics or even coughing or sneezing, and "urge" incontinence, the uncontrollable, frequent urge to urinate.

"Many of the foods we eat daily may irritate the bladder, causing urinary leakage for some people," Gaglani said. "For example, drinks such as coffee, soda, beer or wine tend to aggravate the bladder which causes the bladder to spasm."

Overactive bladder and urinary incontinence occur about twice as frequently in women as in men and become more prevalent with advanced aging, she said.

The emotional toll on patients' lives can be serious, she said. People with urinary-control problems often struggle with simple daily activities such as working, shopping, traveling in a car or seeing a movie, for "fear of embarrassing wetting episodes or not being near a restroom."

According to the National Association for Continence, a research study examined the prevalence of bladder-control problems in the U.S. and found that one-third of men and women ages 30 to 70 have experienced loss of bladder control at some point in their adult lives and may be still living with the symptoms. "Some people think that it's just part of normal

aging," she said, "and it can't be treated."

Gaglani is now caring for patients at her new, expanded location, 31 Nelson Ave., in Melbourne. Patients require a physician referral. She refurbished and converted a single-family home to house her growing practice. Gaglani has been a physical therapist for 25 years, with 13 of those years in the local market.

She is married to Dr. Mukesk Gaglani, a family physician who recently retired from practicing medicine. Their son, Shiv Gaglani, is a junior at Harvard in Boston, Mass., majoring in biomedical engineering. He has his sights set on medical school, upon graduation, his mother said. "He's having a lot of fun at Harvard."

Shiv, a graduate of West Shore Junior-Senior High School in Melbourne, posted a perfect score on his college SAT. He was doing science research at a young age. Shiv is the founding president of the Harvard College Undergraduate Research Association.

Vanita Gaglani says she is seeing very encouraging results in her patients who follow Vanita Rehab's pelvic-floor muscle-training program and other therapies, including biofeedback, to treat incontinence.

"We're seeing excellent results from the patients we work with. And my patients have come by way of referral. We're proud of that."

She said she receives referrals from family practitioners and urologists, "but mainly it's one person telling another about the program."

She lets her patients know there are alternatives to wearing adult "diapers, taking medication, or having surgery" to improve bladder control.

"Pelvic-floor muscle exercising really helps and it's a big part of my patients' therapy," she said. "I also use biofeedback, electrical stimulation and nutrition to achieve results. But the first thing I do is to teach the patient how to exercise properly and tighten the muscle."

Biofeedback is not a treatment per se, but a tool to help patients learn to perform pelvic-muscle exercise training. These exercises, also referred to as "Kegels," named after Dr. Arnold Keigel, greatly improve the strength of the pelvic-floor muscles that support the bladder, thereby improving the ability to lessen or eliminate leakage, she said.

A study published in the "Annals of Internal Medicine" (March 2008) reported that pelvic-floor muscle training, in conjunction with bladder training, resolved the symptoms of urinary incontinence in women, as compared to



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Physical therapist Vanita Gaglani is owner and operator of Vanita's Rehab Inc. She recently relocated her practice and is now seeing patients at 31 Nelson Ave. in Melbourne. Gaglani says she is having a lot of success in treating patients who have overactive bladders. Her program centers on pelvic-floor muscle training.

"drug therapy, medical devices, and estrogen therapy," among other treatments.

The study included 96 randomized controlled trials and three systematic reviews from 1990 through 2007.

According to the American Physical Therapy Association, proper preventive measures and treatment by a "physical therapist can help patients manage, if not alleviate, this often-debilitating condition."

Kegel exercises are the "most effective weapon" in the fight against stress incontinence in women, the APTA report says.

The pelvic floor is made up of a group of muscles. The largest muscle in this group is the pubococcygeus muscle, Vanita Gaglani said. "The pelvic-floor muscles support pelvic organs such as the bladder and uterus and hold them in place." If the pelvic floor is weak, "your bladder and other pelvic organs may sag out of place." Kegel exercises can help "you strengthen your pelvic-floor muscles."

Physical therapists can offer lifestyle changes that will help make the bladder less irritable. These include "retraining the bladder."