BROADCAST-High-tech goggles bring clarity to vertigo

OSF patient who struggled for decades gets answers, treatment

ANCHOR LEAD-IN:

An episode of vertigo recently sidelined a performer from Dancing with the Stars while he was on tour in Peoria. Doctors diagnosed Val Chmerkovskiy with benign paroxysmal positional vertigo, or BPPV — a condition caused by loose crystals in the inner ear. It's the same disorder a Bloomington man has been dealing with for decades but now there's new equipment for better diagnosis and treatment.

Eighty-two-year-old Dave Williams remembers his first episode in his 40s, waking up in the middle of the night with the room spinning so badly he thought he was having a heart attack.

Vestibular therapist Kristine Cottone says new high-tech, infrared goggles allow therapists to track tiny eye movements linked to balance disorders.

SOT-Kristine Cottone (pronounced kuh-TONE-EE)

"So, it has changed significantly in the sense that it has made it very clear what the problem is and I think 20 years ago, sometimes we were guessing based on test position and symptoms," says Cottone. "And I think that's why we had a longer trajectory of recovery than we're seeing now." (:20)

Once diagnosed, therapists use repositioning maneuvers to move the misplaced crystals back where they belong. Physical therapists can also use a Bertec device which can help with treatment by simulating real life situations and coming up with strategies for better balance.

Williams says the difference from years ago is dramatic.

SOT-Dave Williams

"With the right treatment, the right diagnosis, and the right exercises, you can fix it pretty quick." (:15)

Specialists say most cases of positional vertigo improve after just a few therapy sessions.