

# Physical therapy relieves back pain



**Figueroa & Colina Rehab Services, Inc.**

Fernando Figueroa, PT, MS, PhD • Ana Colina-Correa, PT, MS

I lost my balance and fell,” Florine Hartman says simply. “The fall hurt my back.”

As a result, Florine experienced quite a bit of pain. “I enjoy croquet,” relates Florine, “but it hurt so much just to swing the mallet that I had to give it up.”

Florine thought the injury would heal on its own and that she’d be off scoring wickets again in no time. When her pain persisted, she consulted her rheumatologist.

An MRI study revealed that one of Florine’s spinal discs was pressing upward, affecting the position of one of her vertebrae; the surrounding area was inflamed. This combined with spinal misalignment had compressed Florine’s nerves, generating her persistent pain.

Florine’s rheumatologist prescribed a course of physical therapy and referred her to Fernando Figueroa, PT, MS, PhD, co-owner of Figueroa & Colina Rehabilitation Services, Inc., in Stuart.

“Fully 95 percent of our pa-

tients who complain of low back pain have mechanical problems with the muscles, ligaments, or tendons supporting the spine,” informs Dr. Figueroa, who is also an ergonomic specialist.

He emphasizes that surgery to relieve back pain should be a treatment of last resort.

“Surgery does not address the soft tissue problems that allowed the misalignment of the vertebrae to develop in the first place,” he points out. “After surgery, without changes in the strength and stability of the soft tissue, the misalignments will recur and cause additional pain. Timely physical therapy intervention that addresses impairments may slow or reverse the degenerative process, thus negating the need for surgery.

“In other words, physical therapy can help patients avoid back surgery and its potential risks and complications and can restore the integrity of supporting soft tissue.”

Fernando explains six primary goals in the administration of physical therapy:



FHCN photo by Nerissa Johnson

**WELCOME RELIEF. Florine is making steady progress following a back injury, thanks to her regimen at Figueroa & Colina Rehab.**

- 1) Control pain and inflammation
- 2) Restore range of motion and flexibility to joints
- 3) Improve muscle strength and endurance
- 4) Restore postural and muscle control to improve spinal stability
- 5) Improve cardiovascular function
- 6) Implement a regimen of maintenance exercises

“Because each patient’s activity level and injury are unique, we design a highly individualized and closely supervised therapy program,” says Dr. Figueroa. “In this way, the therapists involved in a patient’s

care can respond quickly to make necessary changes to the therapeutic regimen and assure patients of steady improvement.”

## Best therapists

“I was very pleased with the treatment I received at Figueroa & Colina Rehab,” confirms Florine. “I’ve had physical therapy in the past for other injuries,” she points out, “and most of my other therapists put pads on my back or set me up on a machine, turned on the power, and walked away for half an hour. That didn’t happen here. Fernando and his staff are very hands

on, very attentive.

“Thanks to Fernando and his staff, I’m feeling better, and I have greater range of motion. I expect to be playing croquet again pretty soon.” FHCN—Billie S. Noakes

## Respected rehab

When you want results following an injury, surgery, or illness, you can count on the professional therapists at Figueroa & Colina Rehabilitation Services, Inc. Their rehab center is located at 900 East Ocean Blvd., Suite 244, in Stuart. To schedule a consultation, please call (772) 223-4563.

*Fernando Figueroa, PT, MS, PhD, is a certified ergonomics evaluation specialist and co-owner of Figueroa & Colina Rehabilitation Services, Inc. After earning his undergraduate degree in physical therapy, he completed his master’s degree in science health administration at Barry University, Miami, FL, and his PhD in health administration at Columbia Southern University, Orange Beach, AL. He is now enrolled in the doctor of physical therapy program at St. Augustine University. Dr. Figueroa has presented three seminars in Chile on physical therapy-related topics by invitation of the Chilean Association of Kinesiology. He is a member of the American Physical Therapy Association and of its orthopedic section.*

*Ana Colina-Correa, PT, MS, is co-owner of Figueroa & Colina Rehabilitation Services, Inc. She earned two undergraduate degrees — one in physical education instruction from Chile University, Arica, and one in physical therapy from North University, Iquique, Chili — before completing her master’s degree in health services administration at Barry University, Miami, FL. She is a member of the American Physical Therapy Association and of its geriatric section.*