

# Your Health

Tuesday, October 9, 2018 • Page C1

## Dover woman fights Parkinson's with 'Theracycle'

■ **Slowing symptoms:** Janet Butler says the motorized stationary bicycle has helped slow the disease's progression.

By **KIMBERLEY HAAS**  
Union Leader Correspondent

**DOVER** — Janet Butler of Dover was 65 and working as a school counselor when she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease close to nine years ago.

Parkinson's disease is a progressive nervous system disorder that affects movement. It is not curable.

Symptoms start gradually,

sometimes with a tremor in one hand. That is what Butler experienced.

A family member suggested Butler start exercising on a Theracycle, a motorized stationary bicycle that uses forced-exercise. She invested the \$4,000 and put faith into the idea that the home-based machine could slow the progression of her disease when coupled with the right medication.

Today, Butler is on the bike for 45 minutes five days a week. When she is not using it, she said she walks really fast as if someone is chasing her.

"It committed me to exercise for the rest of my life,"

Butler said. "I can't believe how slowly my Parkinson's has progressed."

Dr. Matthew Robertson, a staff neurologist at Appledore Neurology Associates which is part of Portsmouth Regional Hospital, explained in a recent interview that Parkinson's makes it difficult for people to exercise in the ways they used to such as by running, but it is crucial to slowing down muscle atrophy.

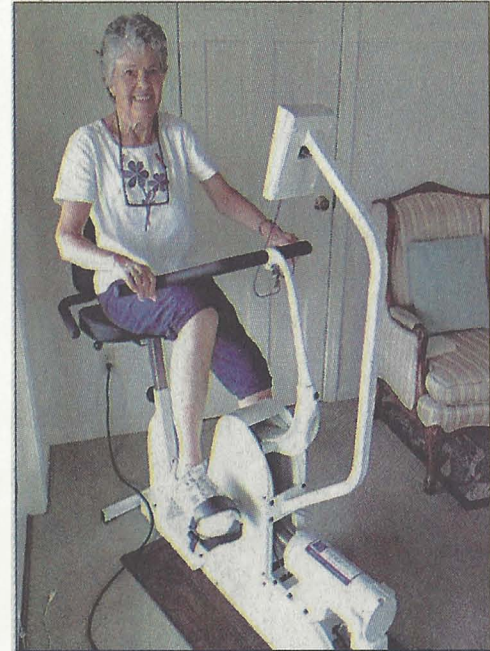
Robertson said they suggest people with the disease pick boxing, dancing or bicycle riding because research has found these types of exercise stimulate the brain of patients in a way

that proves helpful in preventing rapid progression.

"By leveraging these other ways of getting exercise people with Parkinson's are doing better. Plus, boxing is cool," Robertson said.

Rich Blumenthal is the chief operating officer of Theracycle, located in Franklin, Mass. He said the company based its product on research that showed tandem bicycle riding helped people with Parkinson's disease.

A majority of people who order the motorized machine have Parkinson's, but it is used by people who have diabetes and other mobility issues, Blumenthal said.



Janet Butler of Dover was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease close to nine years ago. She recently started exercising in her bedroom on a Theracycle, a motorized stationary bicycle that uses forced-exercise.

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