Hope in Innovation: Emerging Therapies for Chronic Dizziness

At the 2026 Life Rebalanced Live virtual conference, the Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA) opened the week with a powerful discussion about innovation in vestibular care—what it means, how it happens, and how it may shape the future for people living with chronic dizziness. The session, titled Hope in Innovation: Emerging Therapies for Chronic Dizziness, brought together both clinical experts and patients to explore progress in research, diagnosis, and treatment.

The conversation unfolded in two parts. First, vestibular specialists Dr. Sue Whitney, DPT, PhD, and Dr. David Hale, MD, discussed the current state of research and clinical innovation. Then, patient advocates Neil Canham and Alicia Wolf (The Dizzy Cook) shared their lived experiences navigating emerging therapies and evaluating new information in a rapidly evolving field.

Together, these perspectives highlighted a central theme: innovation in vestibular care is not just about new technology—it is about improving how we understand, diagnose, and support people living with dizziness.

Innovation in Vestibular Medicine: More Than New Technology

When people hear the word "innovation," they often think of new devices, medications, or high-tech treatments. But according to the clinicians in the session, innovation in vestibular care is much broader than that.

Dr. David Hale explained that innovation can include new ways of diagnosing vestibular disorders, new frameworks for understanding symptoms, and new models of collaboration between healthcare professionals. Multidisciplinary care—where neurologists, physical therapists, audiologists, and other specialists work together—represents an important shift in how vestibular disorders are approached.

Another key development is the continued refinement of diagnostic criteria for vestibular conditions. Organizations such as the Bárány Society regularly update definitions for disorders like vestibular migraine and persistent postural-perceptual dizziness (PPPD). These diagnostic frameworks help clinicians categorize symptoms more accurately, making it easier to study conditions and develop effective treatments.

In other words, innovation often begins not with a new therapy—but with better understanding of the problem itself.

The Role of Clinical Practice Guidelines

One of the most important tools for translating research into real-world care is the development of clinical practice guidelines. Dr. Sue Whitney, a leader in this area of research, described guidelines as a way to reduce variation in care while still allowing clinicians to tailor treatment to individual patients.

These guidelines are created by multidisciplinary teams of experts and summarize the best available evidence for diagnosing and treating specific conditions. For example, widely used guidelines exist for benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV) and vestibular rehabilitation therapy.

For patients, this means that evidence-based care is becoming more consistent across providers and geographic regions. Even clinicians who

may not specialize in vestibular disorders can rely on these guidelines as a roadmap for providing appropriate treatment.

However, guidelines are not meant to replace clinical judgment. As Dr. Whitney emphasized, every patient is unique, and healthcare providers must sometimes adapt recommendations to fit an individual's needs.

Why Patient Experience Matters

A major theme of the session was the growing recognition that patient perspectives are essential to innovation.

Researchers and clinicians are increasingly incorporating lived experience into their work. For example, international groups are exploring ways to include patient input when developing diagnostic criteria or designing research studies.

This shift reflects a broader transformation in healthcare: patients are no longer passive recipients of care but active partners in research and treatment decisions.

Patient registries and large-scale questionnaires are another important development. By collecting data from thousands of people living with vestibular disorders, researchers can identify patterns in symptoms, triggers, and outcomes. These insights may eventually lead to more targeted therapies.

As Dr. Whitney explained, understanding how dizziness affects daily life—from walking patterns to visual sensitivity—helps researchers ask better questions and design more effective treatments.

Technology Changing the Way We Diagnose and Treat Dizziness

Several emerging technologies are already transforming vestibular care.

One example is the use of smartphones and wearable devices to capture diagnostic information. Patients can record eye movements or episodes of dizziness at home and share those recordings with their clinicians, providing valuable insights that might otherwise be missed during a clinic visit.

Telehealth has also expanded access to vestibular specialists. Through virtual appointments, clinicians can observe patients performing movements in their home environment and gain a better understanding of how symptoms affect daily activities.

Virtual reality tools are another promising area of research. Originally developed for gaming and entertainment, VR technology is now being explored as a tool for vestibular rehabilitation and balance training.

Beyond patient care, technology is helping clinicians learn as well. Online lectures and digital training platforms are making specialized vestibular education accessible to healthcare providers around the world. This expansion of knowledge could dramatically improve access to care for people living in areas without vestibular specialists.

Barriers to Innovation

Despite the exciting progress, significant challenges remain.

One major barrier is funding for vestibular research. Compared to other medical conditions, vestibular disorders receive relatively little research funding. This limits the number of large clinical trials that can be conducted to test new therapies.

Another challenge is diagnosis itself. Many patients spend years searching for answers before receiving an accurate diagnosis. Without a clear

diagnosis, it is difficult to implement appropriate treatments or evaluate new therapies.

Raising awareness among healthcare providers and improving education about vestibular disorders will be critical to overcoming these barriers.

Balancing Hope With Caution

The discussion also addressed a difficult but important topic: how to evaluate new treatments responsibly.

People living with chronic dizziness often search desperately for relief, making them vulnerable to products or therapies that promise quick fixes without strong scientific evidence.

Both experts emphasized the importance of approaching new treatments with a critical but open mindset.

"New doesn't necessarily mean better," Dr. Hale noted. Instead, clinicians must carefully weigh potential benefits against risks and consider whether a therapy has been supported by reliable research.

Patients are encouraged to discuss new ideas with their healthcare providers before trying them, especially when treatments involve high costs or potential side effects.

The Patient Perspective: Navigating Innovation in Real Life

The second half of the session brought innovation into focus through the experiences of two patient advocates: Neil Canham, who lives with Ménière's disease, and Alicia Wolf, a vestibular migraine patient and founder of The Dizzy Cook community.

Their stories highlighted both the promise and the complexity of emerging therapies.

Alicia described how her treatment journey involved working closely with neurologists to explore new options—including neuromodulation devices designed to stimulate specific nerves associated with migraine. Some of these therapies have shown promising early results, particularly for people who cannot take certain medications, such as during pregnancy.

However, she emphasized that these tools are rarely stand-alone solutions. Instead, they work best as one part of a broader treatment plan that may include medication, lifestyle adjustments, diet changes, and rehabilitation.

Neil offered another perspective. Living with Ménière's disease for more than 17 years, he has devoted significant time to studying scientific research and sharing information with other patients. His experience underscores how important it is to understand how medical evidence is evaluated.

Not all studies are created equal, he explained. Strong evidence often comes from large randomized clinical trials or systematic reviews that analyze multiple studies. Unfortunately, for many vestibular conditions, there simply aren't enough studies yet to reach that level of certainty.

This reality means that patients and clinicians often must make decisions based on limited or evolving evidence.

Navigating Information in the Digital Age

Another topic that resonated strongly with the audience was the challenge of finding reliable health information online.

With social media and artificial intelligence tools becoming increasingly common sources of medical information, patients must be cautious. While these technologies can help summarize research or identify resources, they can also spread inaccurate or misleading information.

Both panelists encouraged patients to verify claims by looking for peer-reviewed research, consulting trusted organizations like VeDA, and discussing findings with healthcare providers.

Being curious and informed is valuable—but it should always be paired with critical thinking.

Looking Ahead: What the Future May Hold

As the session concluded, both experts were asked what they hope to see in the next decade of vestibular research.

Dr. Whitney expressed hope that researchers will uncover clearer answers about the underlying causes of vestibular disorders and develop treatments backed by strong scientific evidence.

Dr. Hale emphasized the need for more clinicians trained in vestibular medicine, ensuring that patients everywhere have access to knowledgeable providers.

Together, these goals point toward a future where vestibular disorders are better understood, diagnosed more quickly, and treated more effectively.

A Future Built on Collaboration

Perhaps the most powerful takeaway from this session was the recognition that innovation in vestibular care depends on collaboration.

Researchers, clinicians, patient advocates, and organizations like VeDA are all contributing to a growing understanding of dizziness and balance disorders.

Progress may be gradual, but the momentum is undeniable. As knowledge expands and new tools emerge, the collective efforts of this community continue to move the field forward.

For people living with chronic dizziness, that progress represents something deeply meaningful: hope grounded in science, experience, and perseverance.