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The Great Stroke Adventure was certainly an eye opening experience. However, I’m sure it was only a fraction of what it is really like to experience the after effects of a stroke. Walking was difficult. Some of the gait deviations I demonstrated were hip hiking, hip circumduction, vaulting, and dragging my left foot. Walking up and down stairs was a little scary. I really had to think about each step I took. While walking down the stairs, I tried to look down at my feet to see what I was doing. This was a bad idea because all I could see was a blur. I decided to close my eyes and rely on my sense of proprioception, feeling each stair on the bottom of my foot and my hand on the handrail. After doing this I realized that many stroke patients have decreased proprioception and balance as well as visual changes. Walking up and down stairs must be extremely challenging for them. My overall graded movement was very poor and as I sat down to rest I could feel myself plop into the chair.

I really can’t imagine the difficulties of living with hemiparesis or hemiplegia. Everyday tasks such as unbuttoning your clothes, using the bathroom, typing, driving, cooking, and cleaning are nearly impossible. I had a hard time in the bathroom and had to have Alisha button my pants for me. Typing with one hand was a very slow process, not to mention being unable to see the screen. I believe the most difficult task for me was trying to propel myself in a wheelchair as well as opening the doors to push myself through. It was exhausting. My hamstrings felt like they were on fire.

I really don’t feel like I can complain much about this experience because it was just a short amount of time experiencing only a few of the symptoms associated with a stroke. The motor impairments involved can be extremely difficult to manage and the cognitive effects make this even more of a challenge. I hope this experience will really allow me to empathize with people who have suffered from a stroke. I know this can be a devastating experience for the patient as well as their family members. Proper communication and patient/client-related instruction is extremely important. I think it is great how much these patients can benefit from physical therapy. I know when I am a PTA working with these patients, I will be able to come up with some great treatment techniques that will help them to be as functional and independent as they can following a stroke.