

ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS

PROVIDING STRATEGIES FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT, EMPOWERMENT, AND COPING

BACKGROUND

Parkinson Society BC (PSBC) is the leading provincial organization providing support to people with Parkinson's and their carepartners at every stage of the disease.

The Society has a network of more than 50 volunteer-led support groups across British Columbia, Canada. In a 2017 survey conducted by PSBC, these groups were ranked as one of the top resources available to people affected by Parkinson's disease, having a significantly positive impact on the quality of life. While our support groups are located across the province, mobility issues can limit the capacity to attend in-person. As well, some communities do not have enough individuals to form a group.

88%

say they feel comfortable asking questions in their support group.

87%

say their support group is welcoming.

82%

say their support group is educational.

Statistics taken from a 2017 survey conducted by Parkinson Society BC

ACTION

The solution to the problem of accessibility due to mobility and sporadic population disbursement was to implement webinar-based support groups.

PSBC piloted a 4-week series online for caregivers/carepartners called Carepartner Connect. Facilitated by staff, it aimed at reducing stress, improving coping mechanisms, and empowering individuals to engage in self-help strategies. Feedback from the program was extremely positive. The Society has since implemented a permanent version of this series, as well as introduced a similar program for those living with Young Onset Parkinson's disease (YOPD), and those who have been Newly Diagnosed.

RESULTS

Virtual support groups provide our subpopulations (i.e., people with YOPD, the newly diagnosed, and carepartners) living across BC with the opportunity to connect and exchange valuable information with others. The online delivery method allows us to reach a wider breadth of our Parkinson's population, including in remote communities with limited resources, or where there may be mobility and/or transportation concerns.



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The online caregivers group for Parkinson's gave me a place to discuss openly and confidentially with other caregivers who are going through similar things. It allowed me to see what is common in dealing with a Parkinson's patient, and provided me with reminders and tips to help me continue on this difficult journey.

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When issues are discussed in the support group, I don't feel judged at all as we are all on a similar journey. It feels good to know our issues and concerns are validated by other carepartners. Discussing issues with people who are not familiar with PD is difficult as they don't understand.

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Many seniors already have problems with social isolation. Having a disorder which affects movement can make this problem greater. An online support group is vital to those who need that link to the outside world; one that is knowledgeable, non-judgemental, and inclusive. Thank you for providing this service.

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Parkinson Society
British Columbia