

RECREATION THERAPY

Q&A WITH ENABLE OT

Recreation therapy is one option people with Parkinson's may choose to explore. Parkinson Society British Columbia (PSBC) connected with **Katrina Guenther** and **Nicole Sales** of Enable Occupational Therapy in Richmond, BC, to shed some light on recreation therapy and how it might benefit the Parkinson's community.

What is recreation therapy?

Recreation therapy is a systematic process that involves recreation and leisure, as well as activity-based interventions, to address the assessed needs of individuals who live with limitations. These limitations could be physical, social, emotional, or cognitive. A recreation therapist's ultimate goal is to have their clients participate independently in activities they enjoy, while improving their identified limitations, and ultimately, their quality of life.

What are the benefits of recreation therapy?

- **Physical:** There are a number of benefits related to exercise, including increased blood circulation, improved mobility, better endurance and increased self-confidence.
- **Social:** Recreation therapy can help provide more opportunities for social connections, help build relationships and decrease feelings of isolation.
- **Emotional:** Through interpersonal connections made in sessions or programs, clients can build a supportive and empowering social network which, in turn, can improve emotional well-being.
- **Cognitive:** By stimulating the brain in sessions or programs, we can maintain and improve the cognitive function of clients, which impacts their ability to continue to make independent choices.

What does recreation therapy aim to achieve for people with Parkinson's?

The end goal is to help people live a successful and meaningful leisure lifestyle while improving overall quality of life. Examples of what we would try to achieve in working with people with PD include:

- strengthening the core to improve balance
- strengthening lower extremities to improve gait
- improving fine motor skills and dexterity when handling items like pens, pencils, cutlery, etc.

With recreation therapy, because we focus on improving functional and cognitive areas affected by Parkinson's, while incorporating a client's individual interests, this increases the likelihood of successful symptom management.

What would you say to someone who is considering recreation therapy, but may be hesitant?

Enable OT is not your typical therapy profession. We pride ourselves in being the people who get to have fun while working to help you make positive improvements in your life. We encourage activities that you may not even realize are challenging your limitations, like bowling! Bowling, for example, works on executive functioning, physical strength, endurance and social interaction skills. The opportunities are endless as every individual we work with comes to us with their own unique set of past experiences, interests, goals and needs.

Physicians, physiotherapists and staff at PSBC can help connect you with a recreational therapist near you or access the treatment support you need. Alternatively, the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification in the United States provides a listing of therapists around the world who have been certified through them.

Additional Resources

Enable Occupational Therapy | 604-284-4462 | www.enableot.ca

Therapist Listing | National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification | bit.ly/NCTRCdirectory