

COUNSELLING PROGRAM

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TO THOSE AFFECTED BY
PARKINSON'S ACROSS BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

BACKGROUND

There are over 13,300 British Columbians living with Parkinson's disease (PD) (Ministry of Health, 2014/2015). This number is expected to double worldwide by 2040 (Dorsey & Bloem, 2018). With the increasing number of patients diagnosed with PD, greater pressure is placed on our healthcare system.

The symptoms caused by Parkinson's can have a major impact on an individual's mental health, as well as the mental health of those around them. Patients and/or their family members may struggle to adjust to the social, emotional, and personal changes brought on by the disease. Biochemical changes occurring in the brain with Parkinson's can lead to mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. The delayed treatment of depression and anxiety in Parkinson's can result in significantly reduced quality of life for the people diagnosed with Parkinson's and their carepartners.

Some people may have access to free counselling through their health authority or other non-profit agencies; however the counsellors may not understand the depth of Parkinson's-specific concerns. The alternative is accessing counselling through the private system, which is expensive, and a barrier for many individuals living on a fixed budget.

88%

say it is important
for their counsellors
to understand
Parkinson's disease.

50%

are worried about
the future.

50%

have nobody to
talk to about their
concerns

Statistics taken from a survey sent to PSBC's counselling clients.

ACTION

Following the results of a 2017 survey, which indicated there was a gap in health services available to the Parkinson's community in the form of counselling, Parkinson Society British Columbia introduced free, short-term therapy for people affected by Parkinson's disease. As the population of British Columbia is widespread, counselling is available in-person or by phone for those in more remote communities, or with mobility concerns.

Two registered clinical counsellors, who have expertise in PD, are available to help with issues including adjusting to a new diagnosis, life transitions, grief, depression, anxiety, caregiver burnout, and more.

RESULTS

Since launching counselling services in April 2015, Parkinson Society BC has provided over 1000 hours of free counselling services to approximately 220 clients, including couples and families. Feedback received about this service has been overwhelmingly positive.

As a result of increased interest in this service, Parkinson Society BC is looking to increase the number of counselling days offered in the near future to better support the Parkinson's community.

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I really appreciated the opportunity to have a skilled counsellor dedicate her time and attention to my personal concerns. Friends and family will listen some, but I wanted more in-depth exploration of my worries and challenges of living with a person with PD. I came away from each session feeling more lighthearted, empowered, and hopeful that I could cope with our challenges. The PSBC counselling service is invaluable.

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[The counsellor] was wonderful during our sessions, listening actively, responding with understanding and empathy. We always came away from a session with at least one suggestion or idea that we could use in helping us both deal with our diminishing physical abilities.

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HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE COUNSELLING SERVICE?

