

SPECIAL NOTICE

In response to the global outbreak of COVID-19, Parkinson Society BC staff are working remotely until further notice. We will continue to offer programs and services in alternate formats. For the most up-to-date information, please visit this PSBC web page: www.parkinson.bc.ca/coronavirus. If you have any questions, please contact us at info@parkinson.bc.ca.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Drumming for Parkinson's** | Wednesdays, January 13, 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17, 24, & March 3
Learn more & register: www.parkinson.bc.ca/drumming-winter-2
 - **Hand & Dexterity Exercise Series** | Thursdays, January 14, 21, 28, February 4, 11, & 18
Learn more & register: www.parkinson.bc.ca/dexterity-series
 - **Improv for Parkinson's** | Wednesdays, January 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17, & 24
Learn more & register: www.parkinson.bc.ca/improv-january
 - **Speech, Swallow, & Communication Series** | Thursdays, February 4, 11, & 18
Learn more & register: www.parkinson.bc.ca/communication-series
 - **New Diagnosis Workshop Series** | Tuesday, February 16, & Wednesdays, February 17 & 24
Learn more & register: www.parkinson.bc.ca/new-dx-workshop
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UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Champions for Parkinson's

- Donate a Car Canada: Ongoing (read more: <http://bit.ly/2ORTuJn>)

We're looking for more Champions!

Do you want to help fund research, grow support networks, and improve quality of life for those living with Parkinson's? Become a Champion for Parkinson's and plan your own independent community fundraising event! Contact Caroline Wiggins at cwiggins@parkinson.bc.ca or 1-800-668-3330.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**COVID-19 Safety**

The provincial government has recently announced new safety measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. Please note some of the measures below:

- All in-person events, community-based social gatherings, and indoor group fitness activities are suspended until January 8th, 2021. No social meetings with anyone outside of your immediate household. Weddings, funerals, and baptisms are allowed under 10 people.
- Activities not considered a social gathering include going for a walk, parents carpooling children, grandparents providing child care, or receiving essential services in your home.
- Masks are mandatory in all indoor public spaces including retail environments, restaurants, and workplaces, except while eating or drinking, unless you have a physical or cognitive impairment which prevents you from wearing a mask. You may be subject to a \$230 fine if you refuse to wear a mask in public or comply with the direction of an enforcement officer.
- At this time, all non-essential travel should also be avoided. This includes travel into and out of B.C. and between regions of the province.

It is important to keep an eye on the news as safety guidelines are updated regularly. Stay informed and stay safe this winter.

The netClé Project

The netClé project, organized by the Tetra Society of North America, is working to bring to market an affordable and customizable device that provides computer access to users facing mobility limitations. The netClé is in its second phase, and recruiting individuals to test their assistive device.

Learn more and apply to receive your free netClé here: www.tetrasociety.org/netcle.

Advocacy Update: Duodopa® Therapy

British Columbia's Ministry of Health has announced that they have removed the yearly limit on the number of British Columbians who can receive Duodopa® therapy. Previously, BC PharmaCare only covered five individuals per year for this therapy, resulting in a two-year waitlist for Parkinson's patients experiencing debilitating symptoms.

Duodopa® is used to treat patients with advanced Parkinson's disease who have severe and disabling motor symptoms that cannot be well controlled with available combinations of medications. It is a levodopa and carbidopa drug combination delivered in the form of a gel through an intestinal pump.

Learn more about the announcement here: www.parkinson.bc.ca/2020-duodopa-update.

Share your Parkinson's tips!

We hope to collect helpful tips from people with Parkinson's, their families, and carepartners, to share with you in GroupLink each month. Do you have any tips or tricks that you would like to share with the PD community? Please share your ideas at info@parkinson.bc.ca. All tips and tricks are welcome!

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Depression & Seasonal Affective Disorder**Discussion Questions**

1. Have you ever experienced depression or (SAD)? How did you cope with these challenges?
2. What are some ways you maintain your mental health and wellbeing?
3. Have you ever tried practicing mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques?

Over 50% of people with Parkinson's disease (PD) experience mental health challenges. Mood and anxiety disorders can be caused by the way people cope with their diagnosis, the progression of their condition, and worries about the future. These challenges are also commonly associated with Parkinson's-related changes in the brain's structure and chemistry, including a decreased supply of the neurotransmitter dopamine.

Unlike sadness, which is a temporary emotion, depression is a feeling of melancholy that persists for several weeks or longer. Depression is often used to discuss a casual form of sadness or low mood but it is a real mental health challenge. Common symptoms of depression may include the following that last for at least 2 weeks or more (Whelan, 2017):

- Constant feelings of sadness
- Irritability
- Fatigue or difficulty concentrating
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Loss of interest or enthusiasm
- Feelings of worthlessness
- In some cases, thoughts about harming oneself, death, or suicide

Sometimes, individuals are reluctant to seek help for their depression, as mental health challenges have been historically stigmatized in society. However, the most important thing to remember is that depression and other mental health challenges are real illnesses, and legitimate symptoms of PD that can and should be treated.

Seasonal Affective Disorder

For people with PD and their carepartners, the winter can be a stressful time of year. In some cases, individuals may notice an onset of mental health challenges in the winter, but not during

other times of year. This can be an indication of seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD is thought to be caused by reduced levels of light which disrupt your circadian rhythm – your body’s biological clock – and a disturbance in brain chemicals and hormones that help regulate mood and sleep, such as serotonin and melatonin (Mayo Clinic, 2017). SAD symptoms are similar to depression and may also include low energy, restlessness, feelings of hopelessness, and in more severe cases, extreme difficulties with daily functioning, or delusions.

While depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges are common in people with PD, SAD can also impact those who do not normally experience these other conditions. Even if your symptoms tend to disappear once the sun comes out, it is important not to write off SAD as the “winter blues” – healthcare professionals can offer support and ways to manage SAD to help you live better throughout the entire year.

Coping with Mental Health Challenges

Regardless of the severity of your mental health symptoms, and what time of year you may experience them, there are a variety of effective treatment options available to help with mental health concerns. Firstly, there are many different types of medications used to treat mood and anxiety disorders – speaking with your doctor can help you identify which one may be the right option for you. **It is important to always speak to your doctor before beginning or stopping a medication.** Professional counselling may also help monitor your mental health changes and provide you with support in establishing self-management strategies. *Parkinson Society British Columbia offers free, short-term, confidential and non-judgmental counselling services for people touched by Parkinson’s. Visit www.parkinson.bc.ca/counselling to learn more.*

Self-Management Strategies

Alongside receiving professional support, there are also things you can do on your own to improve your mental health and overall wellbeing. Some of these strategies include physical activity, eating a balanced diet, or joining a support group. Physical activity promotes the release of endorphins in your body that decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety, while a balanced nutritious diet can steady your mood, and make it easier to focus and cope with stress. In the winter time, ensuring an adequate intake of vitamin D may help prevent and manage depression (Mayo Clinic, 2016). Joining a support group can offer opportunities to stay social and connect with others who may be facing similar challenges.

Studies have indicated that light therapy – also known as phototherapy – can also be an effective at-home treatment for SAD. Light boxes may ease symptoms by mimicking outdoor light and causing chemical changes in the brain that lift your mood (Mayo Clinic, 2016). It is best to speak to your healthcare provider before choosing a light box, but generally individuals should look for boxes that provide 10,000 lux of light, with little to no UV light.

Mindfulness and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) are scientifically proven therapies that may be used to help improve mental health conditions. MBSR is a mindfulness program that trains you to calm your mind and body by focusing only on the present moment. Paying attention to only one thought or sensation at a time, with no judgement, encourages individuals to let go of unwanted feelings or regrets from the past, and can help promote better control over the mind and emotions.

The following examples are a few ways you can practice MBSR on your own (HealthLink BC, 2019):

- Focus your attention on your entire body, starting with your feet and ending at your head. As you do this ‘body scan’, note your breath, and places of tension or pain.
- Focus on thoughts and distractions that run through your mind, but don’t judge them. Simply note thoughts and feelings that may arise, and then focus your attention back on the present moment. It is ok if your mind wanders, just keep trying to return to the present moment.
- Take a slow walk by yourself and focus on counting your steps, your breath, or feeling the temperature in the air.
- Imagine your mind as a sky and your thoughts as clouds, and simply watch the thoughts float across your ‘mind’s sky’, letting them pass by without judgement.

While stress and pain can often make you feel out of control, it is actually possible to control your body and mind’s response. MBSR helps break habitual ways of reacting to difficult situations and instead promotes a more positive, peaceful mindset.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a strategy that also works to modify thought and behaviour patterns in order to improve mental health. You and your counsellor or psychologist may work together on CBT, but the principals can also be applied outside of professional

sessions. CBT is based on the idea that negative actions and feelings are a result of distorted perceptions of situations (Holland, 2018). For example, if a friend does not return a missed phone call, you may assume they are mad at you, when in reality they may simply be busy that day and have no time to socialize. CBT treatment involves learning to identify false beliefs, adjust your response, and practice self-talk that is positive, accurate, and balanced (Holland, 2018). Reforming thought patterns can help break through inaccurate or destructive perceptions that may be causing negative feelings and contributing to your mental health concerns.

Additional Resources

Mental Health and Parkinson's Disease | Helpsheet | <http://bit.ly/mentalhealthpd>

Mood Changes in Parkinson's Disease | Helpsheet | <http://bit.ly/pddepressionanxiety>

Depression in Parkinson's Disease | Helpsheet | <http://bit.ly/depressionpd>

Coping Skills | Worksheet | Therapist Aid | <http://bit.ly/copingskillsdepression>

The Cognitive Model | Worksheet | Therapist Aid | <http://bit.ly/cognitivemodel>

Sources

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