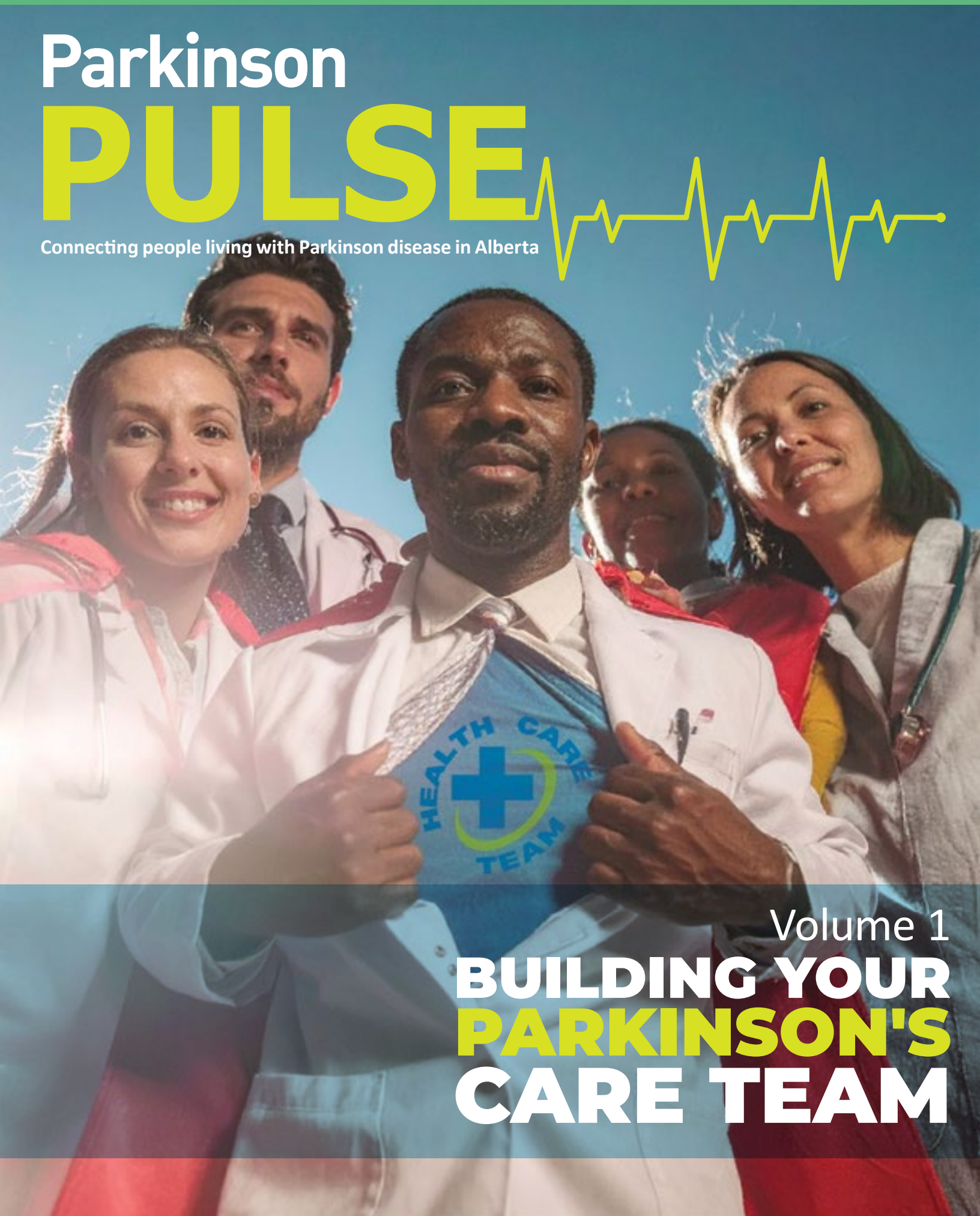
Parkinson Association of Alberta *Quarterly Magazine* Fall 2025

Parkinson PULSE

Connecting people living with Parkinson disease in Alberta



Volume 1

BUILDING YOUR PARKINSON'S CARE TEAM

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Fall 2025

In This Issue...

Every Issue

Parkinson Association of Alberta

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Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Parkinson Association of Alberta and are NOT intended as medical advice. Please consult your doctor or neurologist in all matters relating to health concerns or medication.

Parkinson Association of Alberta empowers individuals and families throughout their Parkinson's journey, responding to each unique need with knowledgeable and compassionate support.

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Message from our Executive Director

Dear friends,

I hope you had a wonderful summer. I am grateful to have been able to spend time with so many of you and continue to learn and grow with this community. I've had some really incredible moving and heartwarming moments that I will always remember and cherish, and I thank you for inviting us into your lives.

This summer, we were incredibly fortunate to receive support from the Canada Summer Jobs program and almost doubled our team! These amazing young people in Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary and Yellowknife shared their time to help with administrative, client services, event (Step 'N Stride) planning and communications work. Special thanks to Logan, Cassidy, Asham, Suwan, Annika, Colton, Jakob, Karson, Salo, Janica and DJ for your humor, hard work and enthusiasm.

On page XX of this edition of Thrive, you'll read a story written by the mom of one of our summer staff. We met DJ when the family, friends and former colleagues of David Kerslake invited a few of us for dinner in St. Albert. He so impressed us as a thoughtful and intelligent young man, we invited him to have a conversation with us about a summer position. After an engaging conversation, he accepted, and at 18 years old, was the youngest of our team members. DJ's close relationship with his grandpa showed clearly in his care and attention to the people he spent time with. We hope you enjoy reading David's story and are so grateful for the investment of this wonderful group of people and for bringing DJ to our team.

Step 'n Stride Walk for Parkinson's on September 6, 7 and 13 was an incredible way to end the summer. I was able to attend both Edmonton and Grande Prairie and heard wonderful things about each event I missed. We were blessed with amazing sponsors, fundraisers, volunteers and guests and although we would need another ten pages to name everyone here, please know how much we appreciate you. I would, however, like to mention two gentlemen who have demonstrated such investment in fundraising for Parkinson Association of Alberta. Ron Bing and Stuart Myron's Calgary team secured 210 donations, raising over $42,000! Thank you, Ron and Stuart and every person who donated and/or fundraised on behalf of PAA. We are grateful! Special thanks to our team, led by Lance Corbett, for the extraordinary effort executing these important events.

We look forward to new programming, Hope Conference and all the wonderful activities underway this fall. Thank you for your continued support and as always, please connect with any comments or questions or if we can be helpful in any way as you navigate the Parkinson's journey.

Al the best,
Lana

BUILDING YOUR PARKINSON'S CARE TEAM

Written By: Brandi La Bonte

Before we get into the topic of this issue, I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge an ongoing challenge many of you are having in terms of access to care. Long wait times, retiring healthcare professionals, increasing costs, and declining access in general have left many struggling to find care, help and support. It is understandably frustrating and stressful. And unfortunately, these issues are unlikely to have quick or easy solutions.

We wanted you to know that as an organization we do what we can on a systemic level to advocate for the Parkinson's Community including:

- **Regular meetings with both Movement Disorders Programs, community neurologists, researchers, and other key stakeholders**
- **Take part in relevant provincial government townhalls (including 10 for the Government of Alberta's Health System Refocusing across Alberta)**
- **Take part in relevant local, provincial, and federal government sessions, surveys, and questionnaires on accessibility, seniors, care partners, transportation, affordable housing, etc.**
- **Participate in committees and groups that aim to drive patient-centered healthcare forward including Health Coalition of Alberta, Alberta Neurological Network, and Alberta Allied Health and Rehabilitation Strategic Coalition**
- **Federal advocacy in conjunction with the other Parkinson's organizations in Canada**

Our primary focus however is the direct, day-to-day supports and services for the Parkinson's Community. To borrow and modify Theodore Roosevelt's famous quote; we do what we can, with what we have, to help those we serve. And this brings me back (in a long and winding way) to the original acknowledgement of the access to care challenges some are facing, particularly when trying to build the Parkinson's Care Team this issue is all about. We realize that not everyone is going to have access to all these people – whether due to lack of access, geography, transportation challenges, financial constraints or any other reason. There are plenty of creative ways to get the help and support you need to live well with Parkinson's. To that end, I encourage you to regard this issue like suggestions rather than must haves. After all everyone is unique and individual in their journey with Parkinson's.

So, what the heck is a Parkinson's Care Team?

Simply put, a Parkinson's Care Team is a group of diverse people who you can provide you with support, care, information and connection throughout your Parkinson's journey. Think of your Parkinson's Care Team like a sports team or hit tv series. You are the captain of your team or leading lady/man of your series, but you are not alone. Family and friends, community resources, and health care professionals are there to help you.

Who Am I Going to "Draft" or "Cast" on My Parkinson's Care Team?

Great question! Well first up is YOU. You know yourself better than anyone. Your personal knowledge: the expertise and experience of knowing your own body, strengths, challenges, values, and individuality, this is why YOU are the Team Captain or Leading Lady/Man. Then, like every good sports team or tv series you have a variety of people in different positions/roles to round out your roster or cast. First stringers and beloved castmates you can't do without. Special teams or characters that only appear for a few episodes. Throughout your Parkinson's journey you may receive care and support from a wide variety of professionals at different times. So, as you go along your journey with Parkinson's you may also find yourself needing to make a trade or recast a role.

You'll build your Parkinson's Care Team so that it is unique to you; ensuring that the players/castmates have the expertise; access to support and resources; and the ability to use education and knowledge of Parkinson's to improve your day-to-day living both now and in the future. Together we become members of the same team – a team focused on your well-being and quality of life.

Other types of team members can include: group exercise facilitator, personal trainer, meditation instructor, acupuncturist, reflexologist, vocational specialist, etc.

As you can see there are a LOT of people you can consider filling positions or roles on your Parkinson's Care Team. So many in fact, that we can't fit them all in one magazine issue. We've selected half or so for Volume One and will continue with the rest in an upcoming Volume Two.

Building your Parkinson's Care Team can help you lead a healthier, more supported, active, and engaged life with Parkinson's. Determining the most appropriate people and recruiting your Parkinson's Care Team can be a big task, even for the Team Captain or Leading person.

If you are having trouble finding help or don't know where to begin, please reach out and we can help you get started. ■

To help you determine which people might be best suited for your Parkinson's Care Team

In this issue we will breakdown the different players/roles. Who they are, what they do, and how you can access them. We've listed some of the key positions/characters below in no particular order.

- **Primary Care Provider**
- **Neurologist/Movement Disorders Specialist**
- **Pharmacist**
- **Physiotherapist**
- **PAA Client Services Coordinator**
- **Registered Dietician**
- **Occupational Therapist**
- **Mental Health Professionals**
- **Geriatrician**
- **Massage Therapist**
- **Speech Language Pathologist**

WALKING BESIDE YOU

Sometimes people just need to know they're not alone

Written By: Brienne Leclaire

When you hear the words "You have Parkinson's" life as you know it changes in an instant. Some feel relief that they "have an answer" to the changes they've been experiencing. For others, fear, confusion, and uncertainty set in. All, inevitably have question; lots and lots of questions.

This is where we, the Client Services Team at Parkinson Association of Alberta, come in. We are the friendly faces and steady voices that stay with you and your family as you navigate your journey with Parkinson's. We're not just professionals, we're guides, advocates, cheerleaders, strong shoulders to lean on, and a human support system for you (and your family) when you need it.

"Sometimes people just need to know they're not alone;" says my fellow Client Services Team member Charlene, "we're here to remind them that even when things feel uncertain, they still have choices, dignity, and support."

Client Services Coordinators help bridge the gap between a medical diagnosis and the real-world support people need every day. With different backgrounds (including social work, nursing, and human services) and strengths, we bring a depth and breadth of knowledge, compassion, patience, understanding, and a genuine desire to help.

What Do Client Services Coordinators Do?

No two days look the same, because no two clients are the same. There is no "one" or "right" way to live well with Parkinson's. It affects everyone differently, and so we work everyday to tailor support, services, resources, and information to each individual or family's unique needs. The right support, at the right time throughout the Parkinson's journey.

Serving Alberta and Northwest Territories (with a dash of clients from Saskatchewan, other territories/provinces, and a few other countries) we offer and facilitate no and low-cost support and service options that can be accessed via variety of platforms – online, telephone (including a toll-free line), and some in person; ensuring that no matter where people impacted by Parkinson's live, we are here to help!

Our Support Programs are designed to provide both emotional/mental health and practical support options to individuals, care partners and families throughout their journeys with Parkinson's. These programs include One-on-One/Family support, 40 Support Groups (including Young Onset, Care Partner, & Solo groups), Care Partner Programs, Ambiguous Grief & Loss Program, and more.

> *"we're here to remind them that even when things feel uncertain, they still have choices, dignity, and support."*
>
> *PAA's Client Services Team*

The most utilized service we provide is our one-on-one (1:1) and family support. Done over the phone, on zoom, and sometimes in person, this type of support is tailored to you and your current/pressing needs/wants. This type of support can look like:

- **helping you/your loved ones learn more about Parkinson disease or Atypical Parkinsonism – from what Parkinson's is and isn't, to understanding specific non-motor symptoms or treatment options, and much more.**
- **supporting people with Parkinson's, care partners, or family members who may be feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, or unsure and are looking for mental health support.**
- **helping you live well with Parkinson's in what ever way that looks like for you – maybe a conversation about housing transitions, accessing home care, or how to get motivated to exercise or remain active.**
- **assistance with applications or referrals for mobility aids, financial aids, support services, or other essential supports though your local community or various levels of government.**

Our Education Programs equip people with the high-quality knowledge and tools they need to feel empowered to take control of their lives, advocate for themselves and make decisions that will help themselves and/or their loved ones live well with Parkinson's. These programs include printed/online information and resources, the ever-expanding Parkinson's 101 Education Series, Webinars, Ask an Expert sessions, Aware in Care Self-Advocacy Kit, Hope Conference, and a quarterly magazine.

Our Active Programming is all about taking action, staying motivated, and staying connected…to keep bodies, minds, voices, and hearts strong and healthy. These programs are divided into four categories: physical, voice/speech, cognitive and social, with a variety of options to get – and keep – people active. Programs include Speech Practice, Social Sing, seasonal social events, and our popular Thinking, Memory and Concentration cognitive program.

The Client Services Team also spends time educating the communities where people with Parkinson's live. Our Community Outreach Programs are designed to educate those in communities across Alberta who regularly interact with people impacted by Parkinson disease and Parkinson's Plus Syndromes. Staff provide general and custom presentations to a variety of community stakeholders including Senior Living/Long Term Care facilities, post-secondary institutions, business, community organizations, and more.

A Human Touch in a Clinical Landscape

The hands-down, most important part of what we do is connecting with YOU! Serving and supporting people impacted by Parkinson's is the heart and soul of Parkinson Association of Alberta. Our Operations Manager, Brandi, sums up what we do best with a favorite quote of hers from Rumi:

"Be a lamp, or a lifeboat, or a ladder. Help someone's soul heal."

We light the way for people navigating this journey by offering insight, information, and education. We help them find solid ground on days that are challenging, or when they may be feeling isolated, anxious, or defeated. We lift people up, encouraging and cheering them on every step of the way. We aim to remind people that Parkinson's is what they HAVE it is NOT WHO THEY ARE; and that this disease does not define them.

And I think it's not just what we do, it's how we do it. We listen without judgment. We explain things in plain language. We'll hold your hand, give you a hug, or even a gentle nudge when it's needed. And we always try our very best to be there and show up in whatever ways we can for the people we serve. That level of support can make all the difference.

So, whether you or your loved one has just received a diagnosis or is facing new challenges in managing Parkinson's, we are here to provide support that is practical, personal, and empowering. ALL of us at Parkinson Association of Alberta believe no one should face Parkinson's alone and we live that mission every day. Whether it's days, months, years or decades into a diagnosis, we want to remain a steady presence, offering help whenever it's needed throughout the entire Parkinson's journey. ■

Did you Know?

We've expanded our Parkinson's 101 Education Series to include the following:

- **PD 101**
- **Atypical Parkinsonism 101**
- **Care Partner 101**
- **Advance Treatment Options 101**
- **Advance Care Planning 101**
- **Government Resources 101s (over and under 65)**
- **Home Care 101**
- **Housing Transitions 101**
- **Parkinson's Medications 101**
- **Speech & Swallowing 101**

and our brand-new Adult Children 101 coming later this month!

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

Your Family Doctors, General Practitioners, and Nurse Practitioners

Written By: Brienne Leclaire

When you are diagnosed with Parkinson's, your care typically involves a team of health professionals and supports. While a neurologist or specialist may lead the way when it comes to managing your Parkinson's, your primary care provider is just as important.

So, who exactly is a Primary Care Provider?

Well, it can be a family doctor, general practitioner (GP), primary care physician, or nurse practitioner (NP). Your primary care provider takes care of your overall health. They're trained to spot and treat a wide range of conditions and are usually the ones you see most regularly. They can prescribe medications, monitor for side effects, manage chronic conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes, and order lab work. They also check in on your mental health, coordinate referrals to specialists, and provide regular follow up care.

If you've been seeing your Primary Care Provider for a while, they are more likely to know your health history, they're in a good position to notice changes, answer your questions, and support you with both Parkinson's and your overall well being. If you haven't been seeing your Primary Care Provider for a while, or don't have one at all, it is important to know that health professionals at walk-in clinics are also equipped with the knowledge and skills to help you navigate not only Parkinson's, but everyday health concerns

How They Help with Parkinson's

Even though your neurologist may take the lead with your Parkinson's specific treatment, your primary care provider plays a vital supporting role. Your Primary Care Provider is often the first health professional you tell when something starts to feel off and/or identify early symptoms. Maybe it was a tremor, stiffness, or change in mobility that brought you in. Your Primary Care Provider may order a series of tests to rule other possible causes out. They may (many can and do) or may not make the Parkinson's diagnosis themselves. They may seek out input from or make a referral to a neurologist.

Your Primary Care Provider will continue to see you for day-to-day health and help manage the care that comes after a diagnosis. Including referrals to other supporting services like occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech and language pathologists. Parkinson's comes with different symptoms that your primary care provider can also help you manage. Including symptoms like anxiety, pain, mobility concerns, sleep problems, constipation, and fatigue. They can offer treatment suggestions, recommend lifestyle adjustments, and follow up as needed to help manage symptoms.

A Primary Care Provider may manage your medication needs if you are not under the care of a neurologist (in which case your neurologist will take on that aspect). They will also refer you to a neurologist if advanced treatment options like Deep Brain Stimulation, Duodopa, or Vyalev are something you wish to consider.

As one ages and Parkinson's disease progresses, you might see changes to your general health. Your Primary Care Provider's role is to continue to monitor for other health issues and helps you manage risks like falls, infections, or complications from other conditions.

Primary Care Providers are often our most consistent health care providers. They are there for the everyday concerns, the ongoing questions, and the moments when you need someone to support your overall health. ■

Parkinson Step 'n Stride PUSH 2025

THAT'S A WRAP ON STEP 'N STRIDE

On behalf of Parkinson Association of Alberta's Board of Directors and staff team, thank you! The 2025 Step 'n Stride Walk for Parkinson's has raised over **$360,000** and counting! Because of you - our donors, fundraisers, sponsors and volunteers - our organization will continue to be a source for support, education, and programming that aims to improve quality of life. Because of you, when people affected by Parkinson disease have a question, need a helpful, friendly conversation, or are looking for the tools they need to keep pushing forward, they have a safe place to turn.

We hope you enjoyed your participation in Step 'n Stride as much as we enjoyed having you.

From all of us at Parkinson Association of Alberta

thank♡you

“Alone we can do little, together we can do so much!”
Helen Keller

PUSH for Parkinson's

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TOTEM CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

AND TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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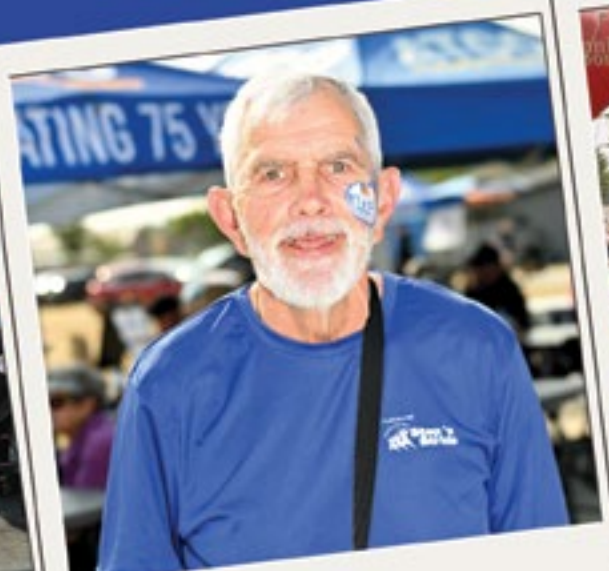


FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Parkinson's & Dietitian Connection

Written By: Candice Mandin

Parkinson's isn't just about movement on the outside – those things we can see; it can also slow your digestion, cause constipation, and can make eating more difficult (for some people). Often overlooked, a Registered Dietician can be a great addition to your healthcare team. You might be thinking, "Do I really I need a dietitian?" It's a fair question — but when you're living with Parkinson's, nutrition can become a bit more complicated than just choosing whole grains or avoiding too much salt. A Registered Dietitian can do so much more than just talk about food groups; they're like a food-savvy detective who can help figure out how to get your digestive system back on track.

How can a Dietician Help?

A Registered Dietician can help identify if you're missing key nutrients, offer strategies for swallowing difficulties, and support you in managing things like constipation or unintentional weight loss — all of which are common concerns for people with Parkinson's that can affect overall well-being.

They'll create a personalized meal plan tailored to your or your loved one's lifestyle, food preferences, cooking setup, and budget. They'll consider:

- **Is the person cooking and/or eating independently?**
- **Are there challenges with swallowing, appetite, chewing, or digestion?**
- **Do symptoms like low blood pressure or GI issues need to be considered?**
- **And are there any interactions between foods or supplements and Parkinson's medications that you should be aware of?**
- **Another great reason to connect with a dietitian? In today's world of endless (and often conflicting) information — especially online — it's easy to get overwhelmed or misled when it comes to nutrition.**

From trendy diets to miracle supplements, there's a lot of misinformation out there, and some of it can actually do more harm than good. A diet that works for one person might not be right — or even safe — for someone else, especially when managing a condition like Parkinson's.

A registered dietitian cuts through the noise. They base their advice on science-backed research, not fads or guesses. And more importantly, they tailor their guidance specifically to you or your loved one's needs, preferences, and medical situation. Like all regulated health professionals, dietitians are required to stay up to date with the latest research, skills, and techniques — so you can trust you're getting safe, current, and reliable support.

Is there a difference between a nutritionist and dietitian?

Confused about the difference between a dietitian and a nutritionist? You're not alone!

The two terms are often used interchangeably, but they aren't the same—especially in Canada, where regulations vary by province. In Alberta, both titles are regulated. Only Registered Dietitians can legally use the title "Dietitian" or "Nutritionist". In other provinces, anyone can call themselves a nutritionist, regardless of training.

- **In Alberta, a Registered Dietitian (RD) is a regulated health professional with a specific educational background and clinical experience. Some Registered Dietitians refer to themselves as "Nutritionists" or have titles like "Community Nutritionist" but can only do so if they have met**

educational requirements, such as a bachelor's or master's degree in nutrition/dietetics, undergone supervised internship and passed a national exam.

- **Dietitians are more specialized in providing evidence-based advice for medical conditions like Parkinson's, while some nutritionists may focus more on general health and wellness.**

To be sure you are accessing the most qualified nutrition professional, look for the initials RD (Registered Dietitian) after the health professional's name or simply ask them - are you a Registered Dietitian?

How do you access a Registered Dietitian?

There are two options you can choose from, either public or private.

- **Public services are often available through home care, community health centers, or programs covered by Alberta Health Services (AHS), Northwest Territories Health and Social Services (NTHSSA), or Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA). You might need a referral from your doctor, and there could be a bit of a wait, but it's usually free or low-cost.**
  - **Ask your doctor for a referral to a Registered Dietitian.**
  - **Many hospitals and health centres across Alberta, Northwest Territories, and Saskatchewan (including rural and remote areas), can provide access to outpatient dietician services. It's always best to check with your community's service location for more detailed information. They may or may not require a doctor's referral.**
  - **Public home care can sometimes help get you connected as well.**
- **Private services give you more flexibility — you can choose who you work with and often get started more quickly. These services have a fee, but some costs might be covered by insurance or benefits. Check with your insurance to see what your policy covers.**
  - **Before booking, it's a good idea to check with your health insurance provider — some plans cover dietitian services, either partially or in full, up to a certain amount. If you don't have coverage, you can still book privately, just keep in mind that you'd be responsible for covering the cost out of pocket.**
  - **Some options to help connect you with a private dietician:**
    - **Find a dietitian through Dietitian Directory (www.dietitiandirectory.com)**
    - **Search online on the Dietitians of Canada website (www.dietitians.ca). Choose the heading "Find a Dietitian" to find a Registered Dietitian located near you.**

Staying healthy on the inside, is just as important as staying healthy on the outside! If you need help finding resources, service providers, or navigating public/private access you can always reach out to us (1-800-561-1911), and we'll be happy to help! ■

NO HEALTH WITHOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Start with one small step

Written By: Cherlene Magnuson

The link between physical health and mental health is complex and often misunderstood, with many people considering the mind and the body two separate entities. The fact is these two entities need to work together for our own health and well-being. Our physical health can directly affect our mental health and vice versa. Living with Parkinson's is more than managing physical symptoms, it is a journey that touches every part of life, including your emotional and mental well-being. It is easy to overlook how much Parkinson's can impact mood, motivation, energy, or even relationships until you, or someone you love start feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or withdrawn. Understanding that these experiences are real, valid, and can be connected to the disease itself is the first step toward getting the support you need. The second step is finding the mental health support(s) that are right for you.

Statistically, we know that 10-15% of seniors suffer from depression, approximately 50% of people living with Parkinson's will experience some level of depression, and around 40% will struggle with anxiety during their journey. These aren't just emotional side effects; they are real, neurological pieces of the disease. Parkinson's impacts the brain chemicals that regulate mood, energy, motivation, and outlook.

You may be feeling angry, sad, or defeated. You might find yourself pulling away from the things you once loved or the people in your life. Maybe you avoid travel or social settings. You might even consider retiring early or avoiding conversations not because you want to, but because it suddenly feels too overwhelming. And just like that, your world starts to shrink.

And we absolutely cannot forget Care Partners. Your experience matters just as much. This disease doesn't just affect one person, it can reshape family dynamics, roles and expectations. As a Care Partner, you might feel stress, burnout, grief, even resentment and yes, love, too. All of it is real. All of it is human. You deserve support just as much as your loved one with Parkinson's. Not just when things get "bad," but in the everyday moments of this challenging journey.

But here's what I want you to hear loud and clear, you don't have to do this alone! There are professionals out there who are skilled, compassionate, and committed. Who are ready to walk this journey beside you. Let's go over who these mental health professionals are and how they can help support your mental health.

First is a psychiatrist, they are a medical doctor who specializes is in the diagnoses and treatment of mental health conditions, often through medication. If you're living with Parkinson's, this could mean getting help with managing depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, or even hallucinations.

A psychologist, on the other hand, is a clinical counsellor. They offer different types of talk and behavioral therapies. This can look like talking through the emotional impact of Parkinson's, building coping strategies, and helping you take back some control. They are also there for the grief, the fear, and the day-to-day emotional fatigue that can quietly wear you down. A psychologist can also help provide family or relationship counselling and support other areas of mental health to cope with issues that are causing distress or concern.

Social workers also play a vital role in managing mental health and accessing support. Some social workers are also clinical counsellors and can provide the same or similar services as a psychologist. Even those who are not clinical counsellors can help with supportive counselling, providing coping strategies, system navigation, and emotional support for both you and your loved ones.

Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs) are mental health professionals you'll find in hospitals or community clinics. They often work closely with doctors, therapists, and social workers to support mental wellness—especially when anxiety, mood shifts, or stress show up.

Here at Parkinson Association of Alberta, we are also here to support your mental health. Our Client Services Coordinators are trained to listen, guide, and support you in any way they can. They offer tools, system navigation, and connection to other health professionals and community resources. For more information on our Client Services Team see page 6.

Sometimes support comes in forms outside the health and social system. For many a spiritual team plays an important role, this could be your pastor, priest, rabbi or any spiritual figure. They are often those who've walked with us through life's chapters and bring a distinct kind of wisdom, comfort, and grounding.

It is important note there are public and private options for the mental health professionals above. These might be accessed publicly at hospitals or community clinics. Some community clinics offer free or low-cost/sliding scale counseling services, so it's worth exploring what's available in your area. Also, many extended healthcare plans cover a set dollar amount or a set number of therapy sessions per year. For help finding what is available in your area we at Parkinson Association of Alberta are happy to help.

To sum it all up, there is no health without mental health. And even though it can be scary or intimidating to ask for help, start with one small step. Reach out. You are not alone. ■

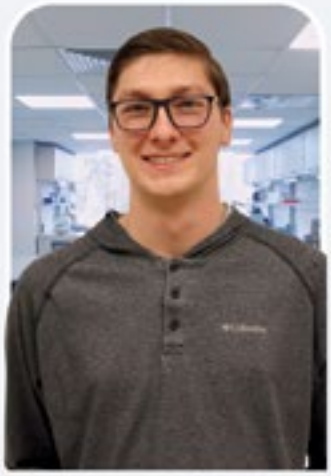
Parkinson Association of Alberta

RESEARCH AWARD RECIPIENTS 2025

Congratulations to this year's applicants and thank you for your commitment to advancing Parkinson's research.

Daniel Mogollon
University of Calgary
Fellowship Award

Julie Jaquemyn
University of Alberta
Fellowship Award



Todd Stagg
University of Calgary
Studentship Award

Research funding competitions are open in April of each year (subject to change) and applications are reviewed and graded by leaders in Parkinson's research in Alberta, for selection and notification in August. Final selections are recommended by the Parkinson Association Research Committee and approved by its Board of Directors.

For more information on research funding, please contact Lana Tordoff, ltordoff@parkinsonassociation.ca.

www.parkinsonassociation.ca

Parkinson Association of Alberta

Winter SOCIALS

ALL SOCIALS REQUIRE A MINIMUM NUMBER OF REGISTRANTS TO RUN

CALGARY REGION

AIRDRIE DECEMBER 9
CALGARY DECEMBER 12
COCHRANE DECEMBER 11
HIGH RIVER/OKOTOKS NOVEMBER 25

RED DEER REGION

OLDS DECEMBER 9
RED DEER DECEMBER 10

LETHBRIDGE/MEDICINE HAT REGION

LETHBRIDGE DECEMBER 11
MEDICINE HAT NOVEMBER 19

EDMONTON REGION

CAMROSE NOVEMBER 18
EDMONTON DECEMBER 5
FORT SASKATCHEWAN NOVEMBER 25
LEDUC DECEMBER 10
PARKLAND NOVEMBER 25
ST ALBERT DECEMBER 9
SHERWOOD PARK DECEMBER 2

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGION

GRANDE PRAIRIE DECEMBER 3

LLOYDMINSTER REGION

LLOYDMINSTER NOVEMBER 27

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED
REGISTER AT:
PARKINSONASSOCIATION.CA

KNOW YOUR NEURO

A Guide to Neurologists and Parkinson's

Written By: Charlene Heavener

According to google, the definition of neurologist is "a medical doctor that specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders and injuries of the nervous system which can include the brain, the spinal cord and nerves." This seems like a broad definition but also doesn't really give any details. In this article we'll try and break it down for you.

What is the Nervous System?

The nervous system is the body's central command center – it includes the brain, spinal cord, and all peripheral nerves throughout the body. It controls everything you think, feel and do! From thinking about moving your arm to making your arm move, from multi-tasking like walking and talking to remembering to be cautious when walking on ice. When a person stops to think about that whole process, it is astounding to consider all the details a neurologist must know and how much knowledge they have.

Education and Training to Become a Neurologist

To become a neurologist, a person must first have obtained an undergraduate degree. They then apply to a university's faculty of medicine and complete another 4-5 years to obtain a medical degree. This is followed by additional medical schooling called residency which can be three additional years of specific neurology or might be a combination of neurology and internal medicine. After completing residency, the next step is to apply to the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons where they must complete an exam. Only after passing the exam do

Conditions Treated by Neurologists

A neurologist studies all areas of neurology and can treat hundreds of conditions -- anything from A-Z and the kitchen sink thrown in for good measure. Some sources estimate 400-600+ specific types of neurological disorders. Here are just a few you may be familiar with.

- **Alzheimer's disease**
- **Brain & Spinal Cord Injury**
- **Dystonia & Essential Tremor**
- **Meningitis**
- **Muscular Dystrophy**
- **Spasticity**
- **Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)**
- **Cerebral Palsy**
- **Encephalitis**
- **Migraines & Severe Headaches**
- **Neuropathy**
- **Stroke**
- **Aneurysms**
- **Concussions**
- **Epilepsy & Seizures**
- **Multiple Sclerosis**
- **Parkinson disease**
- **Tumors of the brain or spinal cord**

they then qualify for a license to practice medicine.

Eleven years minimum, that's a lot of commitment and dedication! But WAIT…there's more!

Becoming a Movement Disorder Specialist/ Neurologist

If a neurologist wants to become a Movement Disorders Specialist, they must go back to school for additional training called a fellowship. Fellowship is a minimum of an additional two years specifically studying movement disorders. Parkinson disease and Atypical Parkinsonism are not the only movement disorders, though they are inevitably more familiar, especially to those reading this. Movement disorders also include Huntington disease, Dystonia, Essential tremor, Ataxia, Wilson disease, and Tourette syndrome. A Movement Disorder Specialist will specialize in diagnosing and treating these specific types of conditions. They may also be employed by universities to teach and do investigative research.

Growing Demand and Limited Availability

As our population grows and ages, the number of people needing specialized medical attention increases; unfortunately, the number of Neurologists and Movement Disorder Specialists is not increasing as fast as the demand for service. (Remember the 11-13 years it takes to get here?!)

As you may be able to imagine, because of the specialized nature of neurologists they are not available in every community and are often concentrated in larger centres. And the more specialized a neurologist is (ie a Movement Disorders Specialist) the fewer there will be. In both cases there will inevitably be long wait times and travel if you live outside a major centre (though telehealth portals have helped with some travel aspects).

The Referral Process

Potential patients cannot just call a community or Movement Disorder Neurologist to request or book an appointment; your family doctor or nurse practitioner must submit a referral to the appropriate access and triage point (think of it like a regional health care queue). The referral letter may be asking for the neurologist to take you on as a patient, for a confirmation of diagnosis, or asking for assistance in managing Parkinson disease. Once the referral is received, the request will be triaged. Wait time from referral to being seen by a neurologist can vary, but it is not uncommon to have to wait between 9-18 months.

How Can They Help

Both Community or Movement Disorder Neurologists help to manage and treat Parkinson disease by diagnosing it and creating a treatment plans. This often (but not always) begins with prescribing and adjusting medications that work to improve symptoms such as tremor, stiffness, slowness, and changes with movement. Because Parkinson disease changes slowly over time, the neurologist will continue to monitor symptoms and make changes to the treatment plan when needed. They may also recommend other supports such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and regular exercise, all of which can help maintain independence and quality of life.

A Movement Disorder Neurologist is also the one to assess and manage treatment options such as Deep Brain Stimulation or Duodopa. They may also take on or assist Community Neurologists or General Practitioners with more complex Parkinson's patients.

In conclusion Community and Movement Disorder Neurologists play an key role in the care of people living with Parkinson disease and Atypical Parkinsonism. Their expertise provides important guidance in diagnosis, treatment, and long-term management. Working alongside other health care providers, they help ensure that individuals receive specialized care and support. ■

PHARMACISTS

A Powerful Partner, Close to Home

Written By: Brett Leclaire

Living with Parkinson disease means managing a lot of moving parts like medications, symptoms, side effects, and appointments. It can be overwhelming, and you may feel like you're floating out at sea on your own while you wait till your next visit with your doctor or Neurologist – especially when it comes to your medication(s). The good news is you likely have a great ally and member of your healthcare team not too far from your house! One of the most accessible and knowledgeable professionals when it comes to medication and side effects might be someone you haven't fully tapped into yet – Your Pharmacist!! A Pharmacist is an incredible resource when it comes to understanding medication, potential side effects, possible interactions, and even help understanding timing and dosages. They truly are far more than just someone who fills prescriptions, your pharmacist can be a powerful partner in managing Parkinson's day-to-day.

So, what, exactly, is a pharmacist? A pharmacist is a registered, licensed healthcare professional who specializes in all thing's medication. They can help you understand how medications work, how to use them safely, and how they interact with other medications you might be taking; while offering advice, support, and services to manage your health more effectively.

They can help ensure Parkinson's medications (like levodopa) are taken at the right times to avoid "off" periods and can flag dangerous interactions with other drugs, including antidepressants or over-the-

counter remedies that might seem harmless. For patients managing common symptoms of fatigue, tremors, or cognitive fog, Pharmacists offer practical tools such as blister packs, medication synchronization, or refill reminders to make sticking to our regimen easier.

From prescriptions to over-the-counter options, Pharmacists are also a great help for treating other Parkinson's symptoms that might not be covered by traditional Parkinson's medications. Issues such as constipation, heartburn, dry eyes, sleep problems, or blood pressure fluctuations are all things that a pharmacist can make recommendations for. They can help you identify safe supplements or non-prescription treatments that will not interfere with one's Parkinson medications. Along with this Pharmacists can sometimes help identify whether a new symptom is a side effect of medication or part of disease progression, and they can suggest practical solutions or recommend when to follow up with your doctor. Their broad knowledge of both prescription and over the counter therapies makes them a valuable first stop for managing these everyday but often disruptive symptoms.

In many parts of Canada, Pharmacists can go even further with the authority to prescribe medications for minor ailments, renew certain prescriptions, and administer vaccines that can save you valuable time and energy. Perhaps most importantly, Pharmacists are among the most accessible health professionals in the country. No appointment is needed, and many are available on evenings or weekends ready to provide timely care when a neurologist or family doctor might be harder to reach.

For people with Parkinsons and care-partners, building a relationship with your pharmacist can provide not only better symptom control and fewer complications, but also peace of mind and a more responsive, connected circle of care. ■

DAVID KERSLAKE

The Art of Resilience

By Su Kerslake and Christina Kim

My dad was the go-getter type. One who felt like knowledge was the key to power. As soon as he received his Parkinson's diagnosis, my dad, David (Dave) threw himself into learning all about his newfound diagnosis. He wanted to know the future of its progression and find ways to continue maintaining his skills for as long as possible. See, my dad was meticulous with his hands, spending his whole career as a denturist and later in life, discovering a hobby in wood carving. Parkinson disease (PD) can make fine motor skills and dexterity a bit more challenging, but he continued to persevere and be resilient with what was to come.

My dad's ability to delve deep into any topic he was interested in was not a foreign task. After moving to Canada from England, he worked hard to recertify as a denturist (at that time called "Dental Mechanics'), obtain a teaching position at NAIT and eventually opened his own denture clinic in St. Albert. Always one to work to improve conditions for others, he became very active in the provincial and federal Denturist Associations, working to achieve significant legislative changes for the profession.

Following his retirement, my dad threw himself wholeheartedly into wood carving, trying a number of other styles before eventually discovering the satisfaction of carving lifelike birds and their habitats. Over the next twenty years he produced hundreds of carvings for friends and family and contributed to the St Albert community by donating to various non-profits.

My father passed away November 2024 at the age of 91. Through his commitment to learning about PD, he would often find misinformation and struggled to understand the disease fully. Thankfully, we discovered Parkinson Association of Alberta who were able to provide accurate information, referrals to local

and provincial services, and most importantly, support for him and my mother.

A month after his funeral, we were contacted by a group of my father's friends, people he had met through his community involvement over the course of the past 50 years. This group of friends had reached out to the Parkinson Association to discuss possible uses for a significant contribution that they wanted to make in memory of my father. Knowing my father's unquenchable search for accurate information about PD, it was decided that this donation would be used to develop online educational materials to help others navigate the challenges of PD.

Our family's connection with the PAA continues despite my father's passing. This summer, my son - Dave's grandson – DJ, is working for Parkinson Association of Alberta prior to attending university. And so, the relationship continues. ■

Parkinson Association of Alberta

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CaPRI

Calgary Parkinson Research Initiative

What is CaPRI?

Started in 2017, the Calgary Parkinson's Research Initiative has been leading research into Parkinson's, working toward one shared goal: enhancing the lives of people living with the disease and other movement disorders.

Based at the University of Calgary's Hotchkiss Brain Institute (HBI), our team of over 50 expert researchers and staff are advancing early diagnosis, developing new treatments, and creating non-drug therapies that support better quality of life for people with Parkinson's.

Get Involved

By joining the CaPRI Registry, you can help shape the future of Parkinson's research, support real-world discoveries and help more people get access to new treatments.

Together, we're making progress — one step at a time.

hbi.ucalgary.ca/capriresearch

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