



April is National Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month

50,000-60,000 people per year are diagnosed with PD, added to the nearly one million people already diagnosed in the US alone. A person does not die from PD but rather the complications associated with the disease which is ranked 14th of all leading causes of death in the US. There are many symptoms associated with the disease including the following:

Four Main Motor Symptoms of PD

- Shaking or tremor at rest.
- Slowness of movement, called bradykinesia.
- Stiffness or rigidity of the arms, legs or trunk.
- Trouble with balance and falls, also called postural instability. Postural instability usually appears later with disease progression and may not be present with initial diagnosis.

Secondary Symptoms of PD May Include:

- Small, cramped handwriting, called micrographia.
- Reduced arm swing on the affected side.
- Slight foot drag on affected side creating a shuffled walk.
- “Freezing”—a term used to describe the phenomenon of being “stuck in place” when attempting to walk.
- Loss of facial expression due to rigidity of facial muscles, called hypomimia.
- Low voice volume or muffled speech, called hypophonia.
- Tendency to fall backwards, called retropulsion.
- Decrease ability in automatic reflexes such as blinking and swallowing.

Physical therapy is an important aspect in helping to slow down the progression of these debilitating symptoms. A strong support group is also needed to help deal with the emotions when living with PD or caring for someone with this disease

The McDowell Hospital Parkinson’s Support Group does not charge any fees. If you are interested in attending the meetings, please call Marlene at 652-6784.

Information obtained from the National Parkinson Foundation: www.parkinson.org & vwhs.org.