

Exercise for people with Parkinson's: A practical approach

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Statement of the problem: Public Health messaging strongly advocates physical activity, a balanced diet and the breaking of sedentary behaviour to attain as healthy a life as possible for the population. With regards physical activity, research on people with Parkinson's demonstrate short term, multiple benefits affecting motor and non-motor symptoms. Despite the evidence, the average person with Parkinson's has been shown to be at least 30% less physically active and slower than someone in the general population at diagnosis¹, with many people not achieving the Department of Health's (DH) recommended 30 minutes of moderate daily activity^{2,3}. There continues to be inconsistency in communication about what people should be doing, at what point exercise is considered suitable during the course of the Parkinson's, and what the 'best exercise' might look like. Such matters need addressing if we, as health professionals are to promote physical activity as a means by which people with Parkinson's can remain well and mobile for longer.

Session Aim: The people with Parkinson's introduced to tailored exercise report it to be an important means of controlling, even fighting symptoms of this incurable, and progressive condition (Parkinson's UK, 2017)⁴. There are multiple factors that influence why people engage with, and maintain participation in exercise^{5,6}, which will be discussed in the session. Some of the wider projects currently underway across the country, and that promote inclusion of people with Parkinson's in exercise habits will also be considered. In summary, exercise has done a full turn from the 1970's when it was considered unhelpful (even harmful) for people with Parkinson's by the medical profession, to now seen as complementary to medicines management. It is now important that health professionals inform people with Parkinson's about the benefits of exercise from the point of diagnosis with the aim of directing them to valuable resources and a consistent message on the subject.

Biography

Bhanu Ramaswamy is an Independent Physiotherapy Consultant based in Sheffield, and an Honorary Visiting Fellow at Sheffield Hallam University. Her practice over the past 3 decades has culminated in her specialist fields working in elder rehabilitation and neurology. A varied career includes appointment in 2004 as a Consultant Physiotherapist leading a Intermediate Care ward, becoming one of the first physiotherapists to gain a non-medical prescribing qualification in 2005. Her roles in the Health, Voluntary and Independent sectors has enabled her to contribute to qualitative research projects, co-author professional book chapters, participate in the development of international guidelines and standards of clinical practice. She has been an invited speaker to numerous (inter)national conferences, and is a Faculty member for the Allied Health section of the MDS. She has been recognised for her collaborative service to physiotherapy by receiving a Fellowship of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy in 2014, and became an Officer of the British Empire in 2016.

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