



# ASSEMBLING A Comprehensive Care Team

**T**he National Parkinson Foundation is the only Parkinson's disease organization with a focus on improving the quality of care and developing models of exemplary care. NPF supports a strong network of Centers of Excellence across the country and internationally that delivers care to more than 50,000 PD patients.

Each NPF Center of Excellence must ensure a high level of quality in providing access to a comprehensive care team offering exemplary Parkinson's care across the full spectrum of patient issues. A comprehensive care team may include: a neurologist with training in movement disorders, a registered nurse, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant, patient and family support services (social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or other trained

NPF's Allied Team Training for Parkinson (ATTP) teaches health care professionals how to build and maintain comprehensive, interdisciplinary health care teams.

therapist), a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a speech-language pathologist, and other disciplines as appropriate.

"Currently, there is a lack of informed, coordinated care for Parkinson's patients in the health care community; this is particularly troublesome in view of the complexity of the disease and the myriad medical, physical, emotional, social, and financial challenges it poses. It is difficult for primary care physicians and other professionals who provide general care to keep up with the latest developments in Parkinson's disease care. Furthermore, most do not have the option of working with a team to provide care. Providing the appropriate treatment, information and education at each stage of the disease are challenges that can best be met through the integrated services of a collaborative, interdisciplinary team specialized in Parkinson's care," explained Ruth Hagestuen, RN, MA, who leads NPF's Allied Team Training for Parkinson.

Patients suffering from complex, chronic illnesses, such as PD, benefit most from an interdisciplinary team of professionals collaborating to provide individualized treatment and a care plan designed to enhance the quality of life.

**To find an NPF Center of Excellence near you, call 800-327-4545 or search online at [www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org).**



**Allied  
Team  
Training  
for Parkinson**

## UPCOMING ATTP TRAINING EVENTS

Sept. 30 - Oct.4, 2009	Gainesville, FL
Nov. 11 - 15, 2009	Sunnyvale, CA
Apr. 21 - 25, 2010	Grand Rapids, MI
TBA	Chicago, IL

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# MEMBERS OF A COMPREHENSIVE CARE TEAM



- **Neurologists** are doctors who specialize in problems with the nervous system. A movement disorders specialist is a neurologist who has completed an extra one-to-two years of training in movement disorders such as PD. The neurologist will monitor your case of PD, work with you to prescribe appropriate medications, monitor your response to therapies and make recommendations for care.
- **Primary Care Providers (PCP)** are often the first point of contact and are usually internists or family practice physicians who will manage your overall health. Don't be afraid to ask the family doctor for a referral to a specialist. Your PCP should receive periodic reports from your neurologist regarding the current management of your PD.
- **Physician's Assistants (PA)** have an advanced degree and work under the supervision of a physician.
- **Nurses** are often your primary contact and the central coordinator of your care. Nurse Practitioners (NP) are Registered Nurses (RN) who have an advanced degree and who have passed special licensing requirements. Nurse Practitioners can perform physical exams and prescribe medications and other therapies. They often work with a physician, although they can function independently.
- **Social Workers** provide non-medical assistance and work in a variety of hospital and community settings. Many provide individual, couple and family counseling to help persons cope with stressful life events. Social workers often lead support groups. They can also help you to connect with a variety of community resources and help you and your family plan for the future.
- **Physical Therapists (PT)** are licensed professionals who evaluate and treat mobility problems such as flexibility, strength, balance, posture and walking. They design exercises or provide training to meet an individual's needs. A PT can also help family caregivers by teaching safe and effective ways to provide assistance.
- **Occupational Therapists (OT)** help to modify or adapt activities of daily living which include dressing, feeding oneself, getting in and out of bed, writing, and performing in the workplace. An OT can address issues of safety and independence in the home.
- **Speech-Language Pathologists (S-LP)** are health care professionals trained to assess, manage and treat speech, voice, memory and swallowing problems. Treatment with a therapist can improve problems you may experience with communication or eating.
- **Nutritionists/Dieticians** can help you design an eating plan for overall health. A Nutritionist can be particularly helpful if you have trouble chewing or swallowing, difficulty preparing nutritious meals or problems with your weight.
- **Pharmacists** provide valuable information about prescription medication and can provide counsel on possible drug interactions and side effects. Try to use the same pharmacy all the time so there is a record of all medications being taken.
- **Neuropsychologists** are licensed psychologists with expertise in how behavior and cognitive (thinking) skills are related to brain structure and symptoms.
- **Psychiatrists** are physicians who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of mental, behavioral or emotional problems such as depression and anxiety. These symptoms may require specialized treatment.
- **Psychologists** can work with individuals and family members by providing advice and counseling for coping with the disease.

*Interested in learning more?  
Need tips for communicating  
with your health care team?*

*Request a free copy of NPF's educational manual,  
"Parkinson Disease: What You and Your Family  
Should Know" at [www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org).*