

Important Insights into Hospitalization and Emergency Room Visits in Parkinson's Disease



Patients with Parkinson's disease (PD) are 50 percent more likely to visit an emergency room (ER) or be hospitalized than those without the disease. The increased risk is attributed to injuries from falls, problems related to Parkinson's and other medical reasons (such as heart attack, pneumonia and urinary tract infection). Once admitted to the hospital, these patients have a higher risk of complications, which contributes to longer stays and a greater chance of being discharged to a nursing home. Collectively, these issues reduce a patient's quality of life and increase costs of care.

Researchers at the University of Florida, an NPF Center of Excellence, recently examined which risk factors lead to ER or hospital visits in patients with PD. For the study, they analyzed data on nearly 3,000 Parkinson's patients from more than a dozen NPF Centers of Excellence. These Centers participate in NPF's Quality Improvement Initiative (QII), which has data on 5,000 patients with PD, making it the largest clinical study of PD. They found that one-third of these patients had visited the hospital or ER at least once prior to their enrollment in the registry. These visits were associated with several factors, including a longer duration of PD (about 10 years), having multiple medical problems, taking multiple medications, a slower walking time and higher caregiver burden.

Researchers also examined data on patients who had been hospitalized for the first time after being enrolled in the registry. Of 503 patients who were not hospitalized

in their first year, 117, or 23 percent, had reported a new ER or hospital visit during the second year. These new visits were also associated with a longer duration of PD, multiple medical problems, and a lower quality of life.

This NPF-QII study highlights several important issues: 1. Hospital and ER visits are surprisingly common for Parkinson's patients, 2. Patients who have had PD for 10 years or more have an increased risk of hospitalization and ER visits, 3. The wellbeing of both the patient and caregiver is very important, therefore better preventive care could lessen the chance of ER visits and admissions.

Future research looking into how to better prevent or modify these risk factors will likely reduce ER and hospital visits, as well as improve the quality of life of the patient being treated for PD and their spouse or caregiver.

Author: Anhar Hassan, MD, Post-Doctoral Fellow, University of Florida, Center for Movement Disorders & Neurorestoration, NPF Center of Excellence

Selected reference:

A. Hassan; S. Wu; P. Schmidt; I. Malaty; M. Okun, on behalf of the NPF QII Investigators. *Emergency Room Visits and Hospitalization in Parkinson's disease: A NPF Quality Improvement Initiative (NPF-QII) Study.* Center for Movement Disorders & Neurorestoration, and Department of Biostatistics, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida; National Parkinson Foundation, Miami, Florida.

Here's what you can do to become *Aware in Care*:

- ✓ Make sure all of your medical problems are well-managed.
- ✓ Review and optimize your medications at each doctor's visit.
- ✓ Inform your neurologist if you've been to the ER or hospital since your last visit.
- ✓ Notify your neurologist when you're admitted to the hospital. He or she may be able to help coordinate your Parkinson's care with the hospital staff.
- ✓ For caregivers: Let your doctor know if you're feeling stressed or unable to cope. Support groups, counselors and social workers can help.

The findings from this study will be presented at the International Congress of Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders in Dublin later this year.