

Parkinson's disease research uncovers social barrier

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People with Parkinson's disease suffer social difficulties simply because of the way they talk, a McGill University researcher has discovered. Marc Pell, at McGill's School of Communication Sciences and Disorders, has learned that many people develop negative impressions about individuals with Parkinson's disease, based solely on how they communicate.

These perceptions limit opportunities for [social interaction](#) and full participation in society for those with the disease, reducing their quality of life. Pell's research offers the public a better understanding of the difficulties these patients face - as well as an opportunity to promote greater inclusiveness.

The research was conducted in collaboration with Abhishek Jaywant, a research trainee in McGill's Neuropragmatics and Emotion Lab, and with financial support from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec. Aging adults both with and without Parkinson's were recorded as they described visual scenes. Their voices were then played to listeners who were unaware of the speaker's health status. Those with [Parkinson's disease](#) were perceived as less interested, less involved, less happy and less friendly than aging speakers without the disease. Negative impressions of their personality were specifically related to changes in the speaking voices caused by the disease, not the ability to describe the scenes.

The ability to communicate effectively is of paramount importance to

the psychological well-being of all humans. This research emphasizes that problems with movement, which alter the speaking voice of Parkinsonian adults, create important social barriers and difficulties with interpersonal communication for those affected. These findings provide another avenue by which health professionals can address mental and [emotional](#) health issues in Parkinson's patients.

Provided by McGill University

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