

Canada: Parkinson's guidelines set standard for care

July 24 2012

(Medical Xpress) -- It's been five years in the making but health-care workers across the country now have guidelines on how to diagnose and treat patients with Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson Society Canada, as well as Canada's top movement-disorder specialists and neurologists, released the [guidelines](#) in mid-June. The Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Alberta is home to three of the authors: Wayne Martin, Oksana Suchowersky and Marguerite Wieler.

The 84 recommendations will provide health-care professionals with practical, clinical advice for diagnosis and treatment of Parkinson's, based on published evidence and expert consensus.

"We knew that guidelines existed in other countries but we felt that it was important to have Canada-specific guidelines," said Martin, a professor in the Department of Medicine. "Neurologists are writing the guidelines but they're useful for family physicians, physiotherapists, nurses and anyone who deals with patients who have Parkinson's."

"We are delighted to launch the Canadian Guidelines on Parkinson's Disease, which we believe will lead to better, more consistent and more accessible care for Canadians with Parkinson's," says Joyce Gordon, president and CEO of Parkinson Society Canada. "The guidelines will result in earlier diagnosis, better treatment, increased awareness and better health-care policies for Canadians with Parkinson's."

More than 100,000 Canadians have Parkinson's disease and a lot of those people don't live in the major centres that are home to specialized movement-disorder clinics. This means patients in rural areas are relying on their local family physician and other allied health-care professionals.

“There aren't enough speciality clinics to meet the needs of everyone who has Parkinson's,” said Wieler, research associate and program manager with the Movement Disorders Program at the University of Alberta/Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital. “These guidelines allow non-specialists to have a sense of what is the standard of care.”

The guidelines will be distributed to family physicians, pharmacists, nurses and allied health professionals, including occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech-language pathologists.

“There's increasing recognition among the group that is dealing with Parkinson's that they need a lot more than just doctors,” said Martin.

Parkinson's disease affects many systems, including movement, mood and cognition. The typical age of onset is mid-50s in most patients, but about 10 per cent of [patients](#) show symptoms before the age of 40.

The guidelines will be published in the *Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences* and can also be viewed at www.parkinsonclinicalguidelines.ca

Provided by University of Alberta

Citation: Canada: Parkinson's guidelines set standard for care (2012, July 24) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-canada-parkinson-guidelines-standard.html>

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