

Learning strategies to cope with Parkinson's

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Joy Elliott was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease more than two years ago. The diagnosis of Parkinson's can be devastating and overwhelming for patients and their families.

"The diagnosis has affected my family because I have slowed down," Elliott said. "My four young adult children know when I say I can't do something, they know I actually can't. I have cognitive issues that have had a huge effect as sometimes I get confused or forget things. My [family](#) has had to adjust. We have all found new ways of adjusting."

Elliott recently participated in a conference for individuals and families impacted by Parkinson's disease co-hosted by the Virginia Commonwealth University Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Center. More than 270 individuals with Parkinson's, their families and friends from across Virginia and parts of North Carolina came together to share resources, network and learn coping strategies and tips.

Presentation topics included the importance of [positive emotions](#), common cognitive changes, young and early onset Parkinson's awareness and medication use in Parkinson's. The educational workshop also included sessions for care partners, young onset Parkinson's and an exercise/movement activity.

"I learned different ways of looking at a situation. The best part was learning about the medications and their interaction with over-the-counter meds. I never heard this before," Elliott said.

VCU School of Pharmacy students, under the direction of Emily Peron, Pharm.D., assistant professor of pharmacotherapy and outcomes science, provided resources and guidance for completing medication logs.

Members of the VCU Student Occupational Therapy Association participated in the one-day workshop by sharing assistive devices to help with daily activities and provided support during the movement activity.

"This was an inspiring and uplifting day," said Andrea Perseghin, associate director of education and outreach at the Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Center. "Helping patients and families come to terms with this disease can be challenging, but sharing ways to cope and to hope is rewarding for everyone involved."

"I'm constantly suggesting to new folks to attend all support groups, talks, speakers, whenever possible, and I will be there again next year," Elliott said.

Provided by Virginia Commonwealth University

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