

FACT SHEET

June 2011

About Parkinson's disease

- Described by Dr. James Parkinson in 1817 (British doctor).¹
- Parkinson's is a disorder of the brain.⁶
- When cells in the brain that normally produce a chemical called "dopamine" die, symptoms of Parkinson's appear.⁶
- Most common symptoms are: tremor (shaking); slowness in movements, muscle stiffness and problems with balance.
- Other symptoms may also occur for some people, such as fatigue, difficulties with speech and writing, sleep disorders, depression and cognitive changes.
- Currently there is no cure for Parkinson's disease.
- Most people manage their symptoms through medication.
- A small percentage of people with Parkinson's may benefit from surgery.
- Other interventions such as exercise programs and speech therapy can also help.
- Parkinson's will worsen over time; each person with Parkinson's is unique and may experience different symptoms.⁶
- Finding the right treatment as symptoms change over time is important and requires the expertise of specialized health-care professionals.
- A single cause for Parkinson's has not been identified. Researchers are studying many theories such as the role of genetics and environmental exposure.

About Parkinson's disease in Canada

- It is estimated that more than 100,000 Canadians have Parkinson's disease.^{2,3,4,5}
- This number is underestimated as there is no national population-based study on PD.
- Due to the aging baby boomer population, this number is expected to rise dramatically. The population aged 65 and over is predicted to rise over 30 years from 11.6% to 23.6%.
- Those diagnosed with Parkinson's under the age of 40 are referred to as "Young Onset."⁴
- The average age of diagnosis is 60 years.³
- The majority of those diagnosed are over the age of 65.²
- Parkinson's disease is not a normal part of aging³; but the incidence increases with age.²
- Direct costs for Parkinson's disease (hospital and physician care and drugs) total \$86.8 million.²

Parkinson Society Canada

- Parkinson Society Canada has been supporting Canadians living with Parkinson's since 1965.⁵ With 10 regional partners and over 240 chapters and support groups, Parkinson Society Canada is the only Canadian charity organization dedicated to research, education, support and advocacy on behalf of over 100,000 Canadians living with Parkinson's.
- 2010 was Parkinson Society Canada's 45th year of service.
- Our vision is a better life with a brighter future for Canadians living with Parkinson's today. A world without Parkinson's tomorrow.
- Since 1981, Parkinson Society Canada has invested approximately \$19 million in over 400 Research Grants, marking 30 years of funding researchers in Canada.

- Parkinson Society Canada and its Regional partners provide information, support and education for people living with Parkinson's, their care partners and families.
- Our National Information and Referral Centre provides credible, up-to-date information and resources on issues related to Parkinson's disease and care management in both English and French. Visit us at www.parkinson.ca or call 1-800-565-3000.
- Parkinson Society Canada efforts to increase public awareness and understanding of Parkinson's disease include Parkinson's Awareness Month in April.
- Parkinson Society Canada actively advocates on behalf of people living with Parkinson's disease to positively affect the quality of health care and services Canadians living with Parkinson's receive.
- Parkinson Society Canada has adopted WHO's World Charter on Parkinson's disease that people with the disease have the right to:
 - Be referred to a doctor with a special interest in PD;
 - Receive an accurate diagnosis;
 - Access to support services;
 - Receive continuous care; and
 - Take part in managing the illness.
- Parkinson Society Canada will host the international Parkinson's community at the next World Parkinson Congress in October 2013 in Montreal.
- National Advocacy efforts have identified three important objectives:⁷
 - Secure funding for a national epidemiological study of neurological disease;
 - Influence the quality of health care, support and services that Canadians living with Parkinson's receive; and
 - Identify and influence key policy issues related to Canadians living with Parkinson's.
- Parkinson Society Canada was instrumental in launching Neurological Health Charities Canada (NHCC) and plays an active role in seeking a national brain strategy. NHCC is a collective of organizations that represent people with chronic, often progressive, neurological and/or neuromuscular diseases, disorders, conditions and injuries (brain conditions) in Canada.

About SuperWalk

- Parkinson SuperWalk takes place every September in 90 communities across Canada.
- 14,000 participants took part in 2010, raising \$2.8 million
- The first walk took place in 1990 with seven walkers in Ontario.
- Since 2000, SuperWalk has raised over \$22 million.
- Funds raised from SuperWalk go to education, advocacy, research and support services.
- This year's goal is to raise \$3 million nationwide.

References

¹James Parkinson, *An Essay on the Shaking Palsy*, London 1817

²Parkinson's Disease: Social and Economic Impact, 2003, Health Canada and Parkinson Society Canada

³Parkinson's: The Facts, Parkinson Society Canada brochure 2003

⁴A Manual for People Living with Parkinson's Disease, Parkinson Society Canada, 2003

⁵Parkinson Society Canada donor brochure.

⁶Progression of Parkinson's Disease Information Sheet 2009.

⁷Parkinson Society Canada Annual Report 2007/ 2008.