

Factors that influence engagement with physical activity for people living with Parkinson's Disease in Western NSW – a qualitative descriptive study

BACKGROUND

Parkinson's Disease (PD) is a progressive neurological disease affecting 1% of the population over 65 years of age, with the incidence increasing with age. There is no cure for this disease, and effective management strategies must be put in place to empower those living with this disease to lead a better quality of life (QOL).

Although the knowledge base about the positive benefits of physical activity for people with PD is growing, the number of people living with PD who actively engage in physical activities remains low. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate, in a rural region, what factors may influence the decision for someone who is diagnosed with PD to participate in physical activities or not.

METHOD

A qualitative descriptive study was designed to capture information from participants via face-to-face interviews. Geographical areas of Parkes, Forbes and Cowra were chosen as the study sites because they fit the Modified Monash Model classification of rural and remote (level 4-7).

Recruitment involved the distribution of informational flyers and interested people contacted the researcher and were sent a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and consent form. Once the consent form was received back an appointment was made for an interview in their home, or location of their choice. Thirteen interviews were conducted in this qualitative study. A cut and paste method was used to group themes, followed by a descriptive analysis.

RESULTS

The data analysis from this study suggests that a person's attitude and emotional response towards physical changes, managing loss, and their understanding of the role of exercise within the complex nature of their PD influence participation in physical activity. Attitude is itself a multifactorial concept, which develops across the life course. Those participants who actively sought resources to influence their attitude and behaviour were more likely to participate in physical activity.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study may be used better inform content and planning for programs that can meet the specific needs for people living with Parkinson's Disease in rural NSW.



Jennifer Mannell

Western NSW Local Health District
JMannell@chcs.com.au

Jennifer Mannell continues to pursue her Physiotherapy career in Bathurst. When she moved from the acute care setting to a community based position her passion for helping people living with Parkinson's Disease grew. She feels strongly that best practice strategies for managing Parkinson's Disease should be equally available to people in the public sector, and living in a rural setting versus private sector and in metropolitan.

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