

## Parkinson's presentation coming up

*By Ellen Waldman*

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Parkinson's disease is a progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects movement. It develops gradually, sometimes starting with a barely noticeable tremor in just one hand. But while a tremor may be the most well-known sign of Parkinson's disease, the disorder also commonly causes stiffness or slowing of movement. (This information is from the Mayo Clinic, [www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/parkinsons-disease/basics/definition/con-20028488](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/parkinsons-disease/basics/definition/con-20028488).)

If people think about Parkinson's disease (PD), they might think about Michael J. Fox. He was first diagnosed with early-onset PD in 1991. Eventually, he went public with his disease and started a Foundation ([www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)).

In fact, it is more common than you might know. Here is some info from Melissa Moran, MPH, Education and Wellness Coordinator of the Parkinson's Resources of Oregon (PRO): "We estimate that there are 25,000 people with PD in the Oregon area. The occurrence of PD increases with age. The average onset of PD is 60; however it does occur in adults as young as 30. There is no cure for Parkinson's disease, only symptom treatments, and the cause is unknown."

The Parkinson's Resources of Oregon ([www.parkinsonsresources.org](http://www.parkinsonsresources.org)) provides support and resources for people living with Parkinson's disease, their families and caregivers living in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

They're having their annual spring conference in Southern Oregon called, "Taking Charge of Parkinson's: Educate. Inspire. Empower." It's from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday, April 22, at the Smullin Health Education Center, 2825 East Barnett Road, Medford. At noon, you can check in, network, share information with peers and professionals, visit the sponsor and local community resource tables, and the PRO book sale. For more info and tickets, you can use this link: [www.pro.eventbrite.com](http://www.pro.eventbrite.com); or call 800-426-6806. The cost is \$20.00 per person. Scholarships are available. Light snacks and refreshments are provided.

There will naturally be wonderful speakers. Dr. Kieran Tuck, movement disorder neurologist from Portland, will discuss building your care team. He participates in an interdisciplinary clinic in Portland that brings together a group of professionals that provide the patient and their families with a comprehensive evaluation at a single appointment. While the Southern Oregon area does not have that type of clinic, he will talk about the importance of a team and how people with PD and their families can create their own team. He will include other professionals in a talk about the role they play in the care team: a local physical therapist, and the organization's social worker, Heather Balducci. Tyler Henry, an occupational therapist and director of rehabilitation, will speak on enhancing the quality of life with rehab and education. There will be a break-out session with local expert, Marya Kain, addressing caregiver self-care. Finally, there will be a panel discussion with Dr. Tuck talking about pain in PD.

I spoke to Melissa Moran to find out more info about PD.

1. What do people need to know about PD?

Once a person gets the PD diagnosis, they have probably had the disease for several years. As symptoms start to show (tremors, slow movement, stiffness and impaired balance are the visual cues that doctors notice), the patient has already lost about 80 percent of their dopamine-producing cells. Earlier diagnosis is key so families can start a treatment plan; however, there are no early tests for PD. This is the hope for the future, as well as a cure.

## 2. What does the PRO organization provide to families?

Some of our program highlights are: support groups; wellness classes (there is an exercise class in Medford on Thursdays, at the Masonic Lodge, and one in Ashland on Tuesdays at the Grove, both free); personal response to inquiries, calling our HELPLINE (800-426-6806); social work services for free short-term counseling and case management; over-the-phone counseling; a bi-monthly newsletter; and lending library, where we send out books or videos and ask that they be returned. The best way for people to stay updated on what is happening in their community is by receiving our newsletter.

## 3. Are there any support groups in Southern Oregon?

We have more than 60 support groups. The three main groups locally are: Ashland, at Mountain Meadows, 3 p.m. on third Wednesdays; Medford, at the Smullin Health Education Center, 11 a.m. on third Saturdays; and Grants Pass, at Oak Lane Retirement, 2 p.m. on first Tuesdays. They can call our office directly at 800-426-6806 if they would like to attend any of these groups.

Learning to live with Parkinson's disease requires a careful balance between the person with this disease, their friends and family members, and the medical professionals who serve them. This event will provide important information to both professionals and those who need this direct support.