

SA Palliative Care Community Pharmacy Update

A joint initiative of South Australian Palliative Care Services

Parkinson's Disease (PD) is a degenerative brain disorder that is progressive and unpredictable. Pharmacists can play an important role in supporting patients with PD.

Parkinson's Disease

George is an 80 year old male with a supportive family. He was diagnosed with PD 5 years ago. His PD symptoms have been previously well-managed with the following anti-parkinsonian medications:

- > Sinemet® (levodopa/carbidopa)
100/25mg 1 tablet tds
- > Sinemet® CR (levodopa/carbidopa)
200/50mg 1 tablet bedtime

When picking up his scripts George says he feels "slower than usual" and has difficulty swallowing his medications.

PD is a progressive disease that relates to a loss of dopamine in the brain. Whilst it affects movement, it also causes a number of non-motor symptoms.

Symptoms can vary significantly between patients and for individuals on a day to day and even hour to hour basis. People die *with* Parkinson's disease not *from* it. However, as symptoms worsen over time, these can cause incidents that result in death such as poor mobility that leads to falls or swallowing issues that lead to aspiration. Patients with PD may have important symptoms that require specific management during end-of-life treatment.

Principles of treatment

There is no cure for PD. No agent has been shown to slow progression of the disease. The aim of therapy is to keep a patient functioning for as long as possible with minimum medications. Therapy should be individualised according to disease and predominant symptoms.

Non-pharmacological treatments

Non-pharmacological management is important during all stages of PD and includes advice and support for patients and their carers, allied health support, exercise and the use of aids.

Roles of pharmacists

Pharmacists can play an important role in supporting patients with PD including;

- > Monitoring ongoing treatment efficacy
- > Advising on modifying drugs when swallowing is altered
- > Advising on the use of dose administration aids
- > Referring patients to other health professionals as needed
- > Guiding OTC medication use to manage non-motor symptoms such as constipation

After further discussion with George you have referred him to his GP for a review. The next update will discuss the treatment plans for George including management of crushed medications.

Useful resources

- > [Parkinson's Australia](#)

For more information

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