

SA Palliative Care Community Pharmacy Update

A joint initiative of South Australian Palliative Care Services

Later-stage Parkinson's Disease (PD) can lead to worsening symptoms and complex medication regimes. Pharmacists can partner with patients and carers to provide assistance.

Parkinson's Disease

We met George in last month's pharmacy [update \(272kb pdf\)](#). Unfortunately he fell after you last saw him which led to hospitalisation. During his hospital stay he was reviewed by the neurology team and his anti-parkinsonian regime was optimised to reflect his disease progression, in particular "wearing off" effect and swallowing difficulties. He is now prescribed:

- > Sinemet® (levodopa/carbidopa)
100/25mg tablet five times a day
- > Madopar Rapid® 62.5 (50/12.5mg)
(levodopa/benserazide dispersible tablet)
1 tablet first thing in the morning

George's wife Joan is collecting his scripts and is concerned about him getting his tablets "mixed up". She also wonders how she should be "crushing" them.

Later stage PD

After several years of a favourable response to levodopa (the "levodopa honeymoon"), wearing off symptoms of akinesia (inability to initiate movements), bradykinesia (slow movement) and dystonia (muscles contracting uncontrollably) occurs in >50% of patients.

Missing medication for PD can;

- > Render patients immobile; further increasing risk of falls, fractures and pressure sores
- > Worsen tremor
- > Impair speech and swallowing
- > Trigger Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (NMS) with high fever, extreme muscle rigidity, coma and death

Roles of pharmacists

The goal with anti-parkinsonian medications is to keep dopamine levels as constant as possible. Often multiple daily doses are required. Patients and their carers should be encouraged to adhere to strict administration times and avoid missing doses of medications. Pharmacists can further assist by packing medication in dosage administration aids and providing strategies to remind people about administration times.

Outcomes for Joan

After discussion with Joan:

- > She agrees to have George's medications packed in blister packs
- > You provide Joan with information on how to disperse rather than crush George's meds and a printout from eMIMS 'Crush?' guidelines
- > You recommend that where possible George takes his medications on an empty stomach to improve absorption.

Useful resources

- > [Parkinson's Australia](#)
- > Don't Rush to Crush: Available under 'Crush?' tab on eMIMS Product Information

For more information

Contact the Lead Palliative Care Pharmacists:

- > **Josephine To, Northern**
Josephine.to@sa.gov.au 8161 2499
- > **Cheyne Sullivan, Central**
Cheyne.Sullivan@sa.gov.au 8222 6825
- > **Paul Tait, Southern**
Paul.tait@sa.gov.au 8275 1732

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