



# The Parkinsonian

❄️ *Winter Issue, 2009*



Northwest PADRECC

Parkinson's Disease Research, Education & Clinical Center



## Portland PADRECC Welcomes Senator Gordon Smith

On Wednesday, August 27th, the Northwest Parkinson's Disease Research Education and Clinical Center

(PADRECC), welcomed Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) to our offices at the Portland VA Medical Center.

Senator Smith spent a few hours touring the facility and meeting with PADRECC physicians, administrators, and a veteran who had Deep Brain Stimulation surgery for advanced Parkinson's disease. "We are grateful for Senator Smith's history of support for Parkinson's disease clinical care and research, and we appreciate the opportunity to show him how we are serving veterans in the Portland VA PADRECC," said Joseph Quinn, M.D., who is the Co-Director of the Northwest PADRECC.

The Parkinson's Action Network (PAN) assisted in planning the event. "Senator Gordon Smith has long been a supporter of the Parkinson's community," said PAN CEO, Amy Comstock Rick. "We can always count on his support when issues important to our community come before the Senate. A critical example is his support of the PADRECC facilities and his work to make sure that veterans with Parkinson's disease, and thier family members can continue to have access to the invaluable services provided by the PADRECCs."

In 2006 Senator Smith, who is the Senate Co-Chair of the Bi-Partisan Parkinson's Caucus, worked to permanently establish the PADRECCs, when they came up for reinstatement. He

supported legislation that formally established the centers, and with the strong support of PAN advocates, this was passed through Congress and was signed into law. This act ensures that these facilities would continue to provide critical care to veterans living with Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders.

"I am proud to partner with PAN and the PADRECC to bring awareness to issues affecting the Parkinson's community," said Senator Smith. "Because of these organizations, Parkinson's research and treatment have made ground breaking progress. With continued funding and advocacy, we can make great strides to finding a cure to this degenerative disease."



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## PADRECC Website

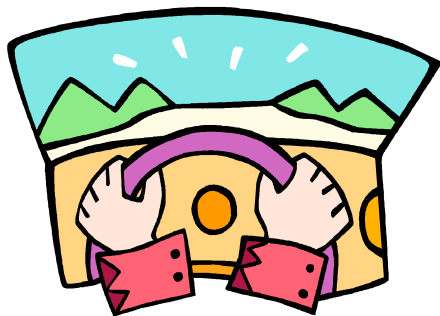


Have the internet? Check out the newly updated PADRECC Website at:  
<http://www.visn20.med.va.gov/portland/PADRECC>

The PADRECC website provides information about Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders, as well as services available to veterans and their caregivers. Here are some things you can find on the website:

- ◆ PADRECC staff and contact information
- ◆ Information about Parkinson's disease and its treatments.
- ◆ Information about PADRECC clinics
- ◆ Information about local support groups
- ◆ Patient education events
- ◆ Research projects that are occurring at the Portland VA PADRECC
- ◆ Other Internet resources for people with Parkinson's disease.

## Driving with Parkinson's Disease



Driving and Parkinson's disease is a topic of great controversy. Driving can represent freedom and influence self esteem in many people. But driving could

also be very dangerous. Many of the abilities used in driving are challenged as a result of either Parkinson's disease or the medications used to treat Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's patients experience reduced physical and mental reaction time which can make it difficult to react quickly to road hazards. Visual-spatial orientation problems can make it difficult to judge distances, distinguish shapes, and spot and interpret traffic signs. Increased concentration difficulties can make it more difficult to attend to multiple tasks. Sleep attacks caused by Parkinson's disease medications can result in falling asleep behind the wheel without warning. Muscle stiffness can create a limited range of motion and make quick movements difficult.

Despite these problems, Parkinson's disease does not necessarily mean an end to driving. There are a lot of things you can do to ensure that you are a safe driver. Talk to your physician and make sure that your symptoms are controlled as best as possible through medications. Buy an automatic car instead of a manual. This decreases the amount of multi-tasking you need to do as a driver. Plan an itinerary before you leave home. Stick to routes you know well, and avoid freeways and high traffic times.

Taking a driving class can also improve your driving skills. AARP offers a course called 55 Alive Driver Safety Program. To find a specialist that can help improve your driving skills, you can contact the Association of Driver Rehabilitation Specialists at 1-800-290-2344 or visit their website at [www.aded.net](http://www.aded.net). You can also set limitations on your driving, for example:

- Drive only in the day.
- Don't drive when there is snow, ice, or heavy rain. Limit yourself to only driving when the weather conditions are good.
- Drive without passengers.
- Limit your distractions. Turnoff the radio and CD player. Don't eat or use a cell phone while driving.

If in doubt, have a driving evaluation done. Occupational Therapy at the VA hospital does some driving assessments, as do most driving schools. Or you can always choose to take a driving test through the DMV. Physicians often overestimate a patients' driving abilities; a driving evaluation is the best way to determine whether or not you are still a safe driver.

If you do have to stop or reduce your driving, don't give up, you can still maintain your independence. Getting places may just take a little more planning. Here are some alternative forms of transportation you can consider using:

- Get rides with family and friends
- Take a taxi cab
- Take shuttle buses or vans
- Use public transportation such as buses, trains, and subways. Many public transportation companies have programs for people who are older or disabled.
- Walk (this is a great form of exercise too!)

## Recruiting VA Studies

### **Memory and Movement Disorders Demonstration Project (VA IRB ID: 1585 VA IRB Grant Number: #02-2202)**

Dr. Joseph Quinn, MD is conducting this research study in order to track the frequency and types of changes in mental functioning that occur over time in Parkinson's patients. Participants would be asked to attend one or more study visits. All study visits would take place at the Portland VA Medical Center. The first visit would take less than twenty minutes. If asked to continue in the study there would be a second 90 minute visit and then follow-up examinations once a year for the next 3 years. All patients in the Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinic Center (PADRECC) are invited to participate in this study. You may or may not personally benefit from participating in this study. However, by serving as a subject, you may help us learn how to benefit patients in the future. For more information on how to participate, please contact Susan O'Connor, RN at (503) 721-1091.

### **Ability to Arise From the Floor in Persons with Parkinson's Disease (VA IRB ID: 1585 VA IRB Grant Number: #06-1405)**

Dr. Jeff Krakkevik, MD is conducting this study to see how well people with Parkinson's Disease can get up from the floor after they experience a fall. Participation would require up to three 30 to 40 minute outpatient visits at the Portland VA Medical center. In order to participate you must be a Veteran treated in the PADRECC Clinic or by the PADRECC physical therapist, Diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, and at least 30 years of age. You may not be able to participate if you are unable to stand or move without the help of a caregiver, you have other neurological or musculoskeletal abnormalities that might affect your ability to stand from a sitting position, or the investigators determine that you are not eligible for safety reasons. You may not benefit from this study, however if you are found to have difficulty in arising from the floor you may benefit from instruction and advice on how to do so. Study visits would take place at the Portland VA Medical center. For more information on how to participate, please contact Susan O'Connor, RN at (503) 721-1091.

### **Parkinson Associate Risk Study (PARS): Evaluating Potential Screening Tools for Parkinson Disease (VA IRB ID: 2021; VA IRB Grant Number: # 05-0307)**

Dr. Penny Hogarth is conducting this research study to estimate the frequency of olfactory loss in first-degree relatives of Parkinson's patients. Participation by a first-degree relative of a Parkinson's patient would require 6 one hour annual visits to the Portland VA Medical Center and completion of 6 annual smell tests by mail. The sub-study would require travel to Connecticut for a brain imaging procedure. All costs for travel to Connecticut will be paid by the study sponsor. All first-degree relatives of PD patients above the age of 50 or within 10 years of the age of diagnosis of PD are invited to participate. This is a research study and not treatment or diagnosis of PD. You may not benefit from participating in this study. However, by serving as a subject, you may help us learn how to benefit patients in the future. For more information on how to participate, please contact Susan O'Connor, RN at (503) 721 – 1091.

## Recruiting OHSU Studies

### **Fish Oil for Depression in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and Parkinson's Disease (PD)**

The Parkinson's Center of Oregon at Oregon Health & Science University is looking for people with a confirmed diagnosis of PD who are suffering from Depression. The purpose of the study is to determine if taking omega-3 fatty acids along with your current antidepressant helps with symptoms of depression in people with PD. In addition we will determine if omega-3 fatty acids decrease blood levels of substances that are associated with depression.

You may be eligible to participate in the study if you meet all of the following criteria.

- Have a definite diagnosis of PD
- On a stable dose of anti-depressant medication

Between 18-85 years of age

This is a three-month pilot study in which 60 participants with either PD or MS will be randomly assigned to receive either fish oil capsules (which have high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids) or placebo capsules. The study requires 5 visits to OHSU. The research study will pay for all costs associated with the participation in this study. You will be responsible for any expenses that have to do with other aspects of your participation such as childcare and transportation. If you meet the eligibility requirements described above and are interested in participating in this study please call Dr. Lynne Shinto at (503) 494-5035.

## Calendar of Events

Upcoming classes, support groups, and other events related to movement disorders

### Parkinson's Resources of Oregon

#### Movement Classes

Weekly class held in a variety of locations providing instruction in the technique created by John Argue (The Art of Moving) for people with Parkinson's. Call: 503-413-7717 Ask for: Holly

#### Parkinson's Center of Oregon (PCO)

**Newly Diagnosed Educational Session:** Occurs every other month. For more information call 503-494-9054

#### Outreach Symposium: Champions & Challenges

(Located in Tri-Cities, WA)  
Thursday, April 9, 2009 For more information call 503-494-9054

### Want to Contribute?

*This newsletter is yours, and we think you should be involved. If you have any art, poems, stories, or articles you would like to share with other Parkinson's patients, please send them to the address listed below or e-mail them to [nwpadrecc@va.gov](mailto:nwpadrecc@va.gov) with newsletter submission as the subject line.*

#### Portland VA Medical Center

Attention: Susan O'Connor

P3-PADRECC

3710 SW US Veterans Hospital Rd.

Portland, OR 97239

### Portland Patient Education Talks

All talks listed will be held in the Portland VA Auditorium from 10:00 – 11:00 unless otherwise noted. Please arrive early for parking. For more information or to register call 503-721-1091.

**Friday, January 16, 2009: Depression in Parkinson's Disease** - James Boehnlein, MD, Director of Education for the Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center

**Friday, March 13, 2009: Caregiver Resources** - Speaker to be announced



A Rose is a Rose

By: Dan North

Dan North is a patient at the Portland VA PADRECC

To receive the Parkinsonian by e-mail please forward a request to [nwpadrecc@va.gov](mailto:nwpadrecc@va.gov). Call 503-721-1091 to be removed from our mailing list



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