

## **For immediate release**

### **Limit of annual procedures in British Columbia for Duodopa therapy removed**

**Vancouver, BC** – December 10, 2020 – British Columbia’s Ministry of Health has announced today that they have removed the yearly limit on the number of British Columbians who can receive Duodopa® therapy. Previously, BC PharmaCare only covered five individuals per year for this therapy, resulting in a two-year waitlist for Parkinson’s patients experiencing debilitating symptoms.

Duodopa® is used to treat patients with advanced Parkinson’s disease who have severe and disabling motor symptoms that cannot be well controlled with available combinations of medications. It is a levodopa and carbidopa drug combination delivered in the form of a gel through an intestinal pump.

Prior to February 2017, the therapy was not covered by BC PharmaCare, and at a cost of approximately \$60,000 per year, which had to be paid privately, it was unaffordable for the average person. In February 2017, recognizing the opportunity for the BC Government to minimize or avoid costs for home care, emergency services, hospitalization, and/or long-term care, it was announced that the treatment would be covered for a limited number of patients identified and prioritized through the Pacific Parkinson’s Research Centre. British Columbia (BC) was the only province that capped the number of Duodopa® patients annually. This cap created great hardship for the few patients anxiously waiting their turn, who were experiencing symptoms including excruciating pain, sudden falls, as well as difficulty breathing, swallowing, and/or speaking.

The Ministry of Health’s announcement today brings significant relief to patients. “In 2017, we were witness to the profound impact that Duodopa® had on a select number of people within the Parkinson’s community. One patient called me with tears of joy noting that she was able to play soccer with her grandson in their yard – something she had previously been unable to do. For some people, as Parkinson’s progresses, they lose independence, and many of the things that the average person takes for granted, such as dressing, bathing, and social engagements, become next to impossible. Duodopa® has given patients a new lease on life. We are immensely grateful to the local movement disorder specialists and advocates who helped highlight the importance of this therapy,” says Jean Blake, Chief Executive Officer, Parkinson Society British Columbia (PSBC).

Parkinson Society British Columbia wishes to express its gratitude to the Ministry of Health for making this decision, especially given that the pandemic has presented additional challenges for our healthcare system.

Those who are interested in learning more about, or supporting, the Society’s advocacy efforts are asked to contact Jean Blake, CEO, by visiting [www.parkinson.bc.ca/advocacy](http://www.parkinson.bc.ca/advocacy).

### **About Parkinson Society British Columbia**

Established in 1969, PSBC is a not-for-profit registered charity that empowers the Parkinson’s community in British Columbia through providing resources and services to enable self-management, self-reliance, and self-advocacy.



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For more information, please contact:

Alicia Wrobel

Senior Manager, Resource Development & Communications

Parkinson Society British Columbia

[awrobel@parkinson.bc.ca](mailto:awrobel@parkinson.bc.ca) | 604-662-3240 ext. 237