



VIEWPOINTS

Spring 2025

VIEWPOINTS

Quarterly Newsletter
by Parkinson Society
British Columbia

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Your support is essential.

Parkinson Society BC would not exist without the support of our members, donors, and volunteers.

OUR MISSION

Parkinson Society British Columbia exists to empower people with Parkinson's in British Columbia through providing resources and services to enable self-management, self-reliance, and self-advocacy.

Here are a few of the ways you can support the Society:

MEMBERSHIP

For an annual fee of \$25, your household benefits from unlimited access to our education and support services, events, and resources.

DONATIONS

Contact us to set up monthly, quarterly or annual donations, or think of us when giving through United Way.

PLANNED GIVING & BEQUESTS

Consider Parkinson Society BC as a beneficiary in your will.

FUNDRAISING

Become a Champion for Parkinson's by organizing your own event benefiting the Society. For more information on how you can support us, visit www.parkinson.bc.ca/donate.

SUPPORT GROUPS

100 Mile House, Abbotsford, Advanced Carepartner Online, Burnaby, Campbell River, Carepartner Bereavement Online, Chilliwack, Chinese Speaking (Burnaby), Courtenay/Comox Valley, Cranbrook, Deep Brain Stimulation, Duncan/Cowichan Valley, Early-Mid Stage Carepartner Online, Gabriola Island, Kamloops, Kelowna, Kelowna Carepartners, Langley, Langley YOPD, Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge Caregivers, Nanaimo, New Diagnosis, New Westminster, North Shore, Parkinson's Disease Online, Parksville/Qualicum, Parksville/Qualicum Caregivers, Powell River, Prince George, Quesnel, Richmond, Sechelt/Sunshine Coast, Solo PD, South Asian Online, South Delta, South Okanagan, Surrey, Trail/Castlegar, Tri Cities/While Rock, Vancouver Carepartners, Vancouver Downtown, Vernon, Women Living with PD, Young Onset Parkinson's Online

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Articles contained in Viewpoints are for information only. Parkinson Society British Columbia does not guarantee nor endorse any product or claim made by an author. In matters of medical treatment or therapy, patients should consult their physicians.

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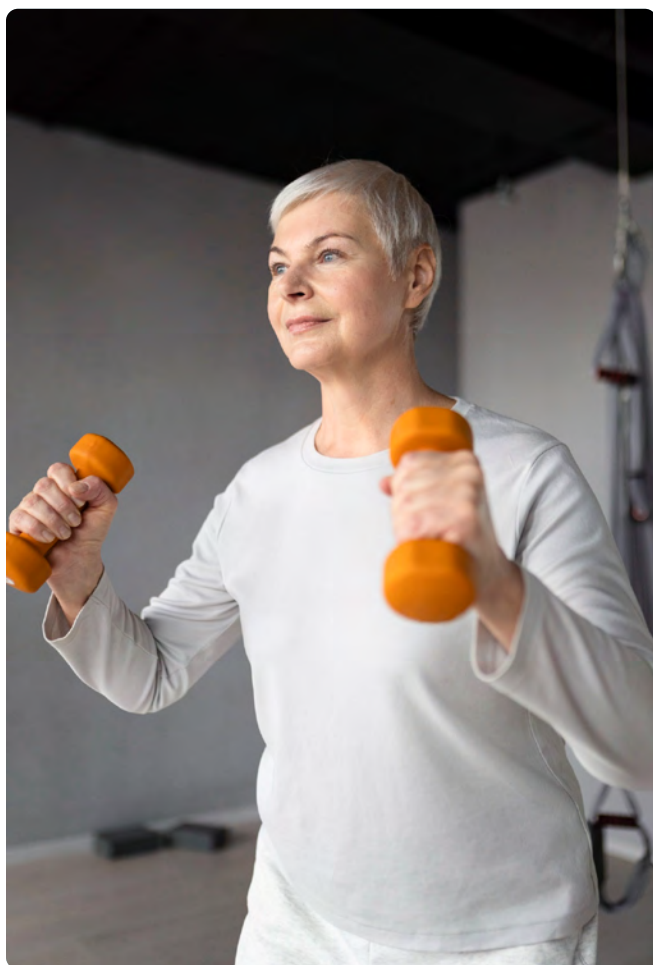
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Living Well

Bone health and Parkinson's disease



Despite often being seen as static and unchanging, bones are dynamic, living tissues that constantly adapt to their environment. In particular, the effects of Parkinson's disease (PD) have a profound impact on bone health, contributing to conditions like osteoporosis and increasing the risk of fractures. Because individuals with Parkinson's face various challenges, including motor symptoms that limit physical activity, the importance of maintaining bone density becomes even more critical. While osteoporosis and fractures are common concerns for aging populations, people with PD are particularly vulnerable. Fortunately, treatment options and management strategies are available to help improve bone health and reduce the risk of serious complications.

What are bones?

Over 200 bones form the human skeleton, which supports the body and gives us our shape while protecting our delicate internal organs. Bones also act as storage for key minerals, namely calcium and phosphorus (*Johns Hopkins Medicine, n.d.*).

There are a few different types of bone cells, including:

- **Osteoblasts:** form new bone tissue, help heal and remodel bones
- **Osteoclasts:** reabsorb bone tissue when not needed any longer
- **Osteocytes:** help maintain bone tissue

When we are young, osteoblasts work quickly, allowing a child's skeleton to grow in size rapidly. As we age, this growth slows down – consider that a child's bones completely renew themselves every two years, but it takes an adult's seven to ten years to do the same (*Royal Osteoporosis Society, n.d.*).

Bone density and strength

Bone mineral density (BMD) refers to the amount of calcium and other minerals in bone; generally, the more mineral density, the stronger the bone and more resistant it is to fractures. The most common way to measure BMD is through something called dual energy X-ray absorptiometry, or DXA/DEXA. This low-radiation test compares you to other people to determine your relative BMD. Sufficient bone density is crucial; without it, conditions like osteopenia (a mild loss of bone mineral density) can progress to osteoporosis, a more severe form of BMD loss (*NIAMS, 2023*).

OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis occurs when the body loses bone faster than it can replace it, and typically develops from a combination of advancing age, lack of exercise, and poor nutrition. These factors reduce bone mineral density at the rate of 1% each year after one turns 40 (*Harvard Health, 2024*).

It is a very serious condition, as brittle bones are more likely to break from minor bumps and traumas, such as picking up a bag of groceries or falling from a short distance. The 2009 Canadian Community Health Survey reported that an estimated 1.5 million Canadians aged 40 and over (10%) have osteoporosis, with women having the condition four times more than men (*Government of Canada, 2024*).

Unfortunately, individuals with Parkinson's are much more likely than average to be diagnosed with osteoporosis – up to 91% of women and 61% of men with PD. The reason for this appears to be multifaceted, including reduced physical activity and nutritional deficiency, especially vitamin D. Female gender (due to menopause, which results in a sharp decline in estrogen, thus speeding up bone loss), advanced age, low body mass index, and longer Parkinson's disease duration were all linked to more severe osteoporosis (*Invernizzi et al., 2009*).

Furthermore, the common Parkinson's medication levodopa has been found to slow the rate of bone formation, contributing to lowered bone mineral density (*American Parkinson Disease Association, 2022*).

Bone fractures from bone mineral density loss can be a difficult health challenge for elderly individuals in particular. Historically, about one-third of those who experience a hip fracture have died within one year; however, recent advancements in rehabilitation have reduced the odds of death (*Downey et al., 2019*). In fact, hip fractures are the most serious type of bone fracture, with 60% of people never regaining their previous level of independence (*Harvard Health, 2024*). Individuals with PD also tend to have worse outcomes from hip fractures than those without the disease (*Walker et al., 2013*).

The organization Osteoporosis Canada recommends both men and women aged 65+ have routine bone mineral density tests to screen for osteoporosis. However, for those at greater risk of the condition, they recommend screening start sooner. You can use a fracture risk tool like FRAX (Fracture Risk Assessment Tool) at <https://bit.ly/FRAXbone> to calculate your ten-year probability of a bone fracture (*HealthLink BC, 2023*).



Strategies to improve bone mineral density

EXERCISE

Because of challenging motor symptoms, people with PD may be less likely to engage in weight bearing physical exercise, which includes any activity in which you hold your body up against gravity (such as walking, running, playing a sport, etc.). One of the best things anyone, including people with Parkinson's, can do to strengthen their bones is to get moving (*American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, 2020*)!

Many people know exercise is great for muscles and the cardiovascular system, but they may not know that exercise is one of the most potent ways to change their bones. In fact, when archeologists look at skeletal remains of Medieval people, they can make inferences about the types of jobs these individuals had based on their bones (*Nikita & Radini, 2022*).

Exercises that promote weight-bearing and mechanical stress on bones are essential for bone health, as they stimulate bone remodeling and the creation of new bone tissue – a principle known as Wolff's Law (1892). Higher-impact activities, such as weightlifting, running, and jump rope, require more bone adaptation than lower-impact exercises like yoga, swimming, and cycling. An important caveat is that higher-impact activities tend to be more dangerous for individuals who are prone to falls, which people with PD can be. Always consult your doctor before beginning any new exercise program (*American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, 2020*). Below are some example exercises you can try. Be sure to hold on to support as needed for safety.

Wherever possible, add in weights by:

- Using **hand weights**, **canned soup**, or **water bottles** if hand weights aren't available
- Wearing a **backpack** (*snuggly!*) with weights inside if unable to be hands-free due to holding on for balance. Depending on how heavy the backpack is, you may want to wear it on your front for comfort.

Exercises for upper extremity bone health:

- **Overhead presses**
- **Medicine ball smashes** (*or pillow smashes*)
- **Triceps dips**
- **Wall pushups** (*or regular pushups for a challenge!*)
- **Wall robo planks** (*or regular robo planks for an added challenge!*)
- **Inchworms** (*more challenging as this requires you to get on and off the floor!*)
- Exercises in the **four-point kneeling position** (*such as bird dog*)

Exercises for lower extremity bone health:

- **Marching** whilst holding a bridge position
- **Sit-to-stands**
- **Squats** or squat variations, such as walking squats and crab walk squats
- Multidirectional **lunges** or lunge variations such as curtsey lunges and Romanian lunges
- **Deadlifts** (*single leg deadlifts if wanting a challenge!*)
- **Hip thrusters**
- Any **jumps and hops** (*more challenging!*)

If you are unsure how to perform these exercises safely or need guidance on adapting them to your needs, consider consulting a physiotherapist. Parkinson Society BC offers a free Virtual Physiotherapy service for those who qualify. Visit www.parkinson.bc.ca/physio to learn more.

While Parkinson's disease presents unique challenges to bone health, there are promising strategies and treatments that can help improve outcomes. With ongoing research, advances in care, and a focus on maintaining overall wellbeing, individuals with PD can find ways to manage their bone health more effectively.

This article has been reviewed for accuracy by Parkinson Society BC's very own neuro physiotherapist, Shelly Yu.

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April is Parkinson's Awareness Month

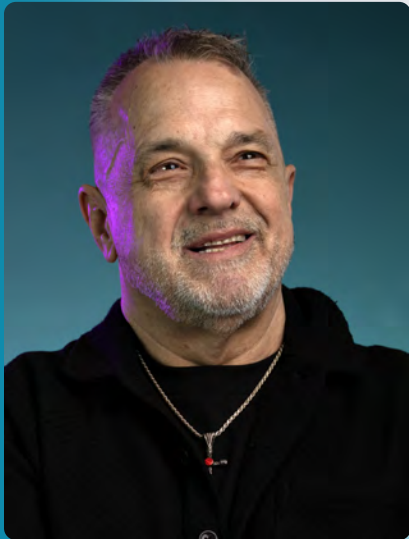
Every year, April is recognized by the Province of British Columbia and Parkinson Society BC as Parkinson's Awareness Month. This provides us with the opportunity to engage the public in expanding their understanding of Parkinson's disease (PD) and the profound impact it has on the lives British Columbians touched by this illness.



This year, Parkinson Society BC hosted a photo shoot to amplify the diverse experiences of individuals living with Parkinson's disease. Our goal was to highlight the unique journeys of people from underrepresented communities, showcasing that Parkinson's affects people from all walks of life, each with their own passions and hobbies. Through this event, we aimed to capture a fuller, richer picture of life with PD, ensuring that these voices and stories are seen, heard, and valued.

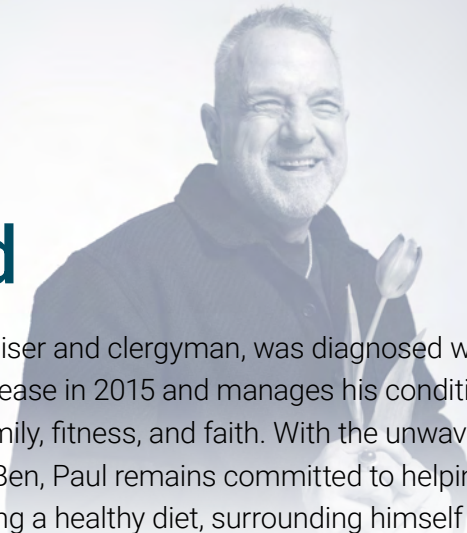
Amanda Single

An avid traveler and lifelong explorer who refuses to let Parkinson's define her limits, staying active through walking, yoga, and Parkinson's - specific exercise classes. With a passion for staying healthy through movement, nutrition, and alternative therapies, she embraces each day with resilience, proving that life – no matter the challenge – is meant to be fully lived.



Paul Evered

A retired fundraiser and clergyman, was diagnosed with Young Onset Parkinson's Disease in 2015 and manages his condition with a focus on four pillars: food, family, fitness, and faith. With the unwavering support of his loving partner, Ben, Paul remains committed to helping others by staying active, prioritizing a healthy diet, surrounding himself with supportive people, and maintaining a strong belief in living each day fully.



Angela Hutchinson

A resilient advocate for hope and perseverance, embracing life after Deep Brain Stimulation surgery with renewed freedom and energy. Deeply rooted in her faith, she finds joy in connecting with others, encouraging support within the Parkinson's community, and spreading the message that no matter the challenges, there is always hope.



Arne Johansen

An active advocate and community leader who embraces movement, humor, and connection to navigate life with Parkinson's. Whether he's cycling, skiing, or performing improv, he remains focused on what he can do, using his experiences to support others and contribute to Parkinson's research.



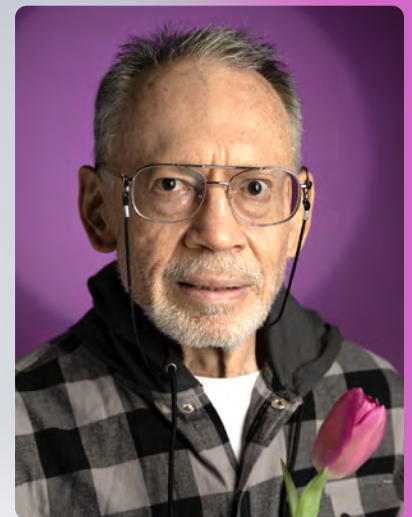
Richard Mayede

Diagnosed with Parkinson's at 37, underwent life-changing Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) surgery, allowing him to return to his creative work with greater control. He draws strength from his Buddhist faith and has become an advocate for diversity and inclusion in the Parkinson's community, while emphasizing the importance of support and education for those living with the disease.



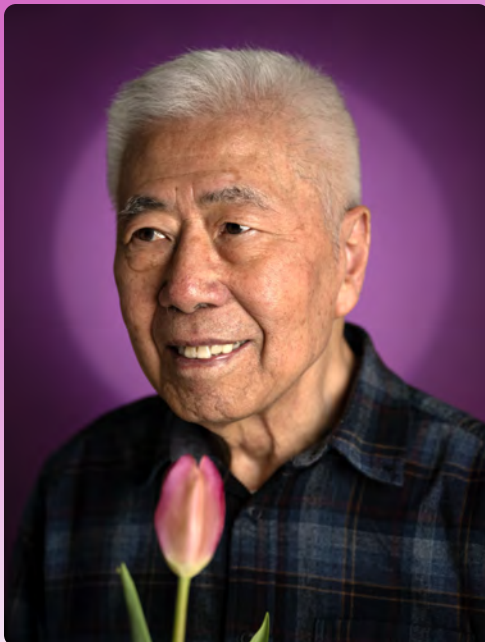
Jorge Villalobos

Originally from Colombia, approaches life with unwavering resilience, turning the challenges of Parkinson's into opportunities for growth. Now building a new life in Canada, he stays active through exercise and community programs – proving that with determination and hope, it's possible to keep moving forward at any pace.



Jayde Marno

A passionate advocate for disability rights, using her experience of being diagnosed with Young Onset Parkinson's Disease at the age of 23 to raise awareness and support others. Whether she's baking, solving puzzles, or going on long walks, she focuses on what she can do, embracing each day with resilience and determination.



Heng Goh

A lifelong athlete and fierce competitor, embraces exercise as his greatest ally in living well with Parkinson's. With an unwaveringly positive spirit, he stays active, encourages others to keep moving, and finds joy in the support of his family – including his four beloved grandchildren.



Look!

Look out for our **Awareness activities** throughout the month of April, including:

- **10-second advertisements** on Global BC and further advertising space on Global News Morning and Global News: BC1
- Inclusion on **Global BC Community Events** webpage, as well as Global BC Community Facebook
- **Various landmarks** throughout the province lit in mid-toned blue in collaboration with the PD Avengers' "Spark the Night" project

Transit advertisements in:

- **Vancouver:** Skytrain (interior train advertisements, station posters at King George and Joyce - Collingwood, and a wall mural at Waterfront station), bus (interior bus advertisements)
- **Victoria:** bus (interior bus advertisements)
- **Kelowna:** bus (interior bus advertisements)

Public library displays across the province, featuring informational brochures, posters highlighting lesser - known PD symptoms, and book displays with content related to Parkinson's disease

Listen!

We have secured an in-kind radio partnership with Bell Media in Kelowna, featuring 30-second PSAs on the following stations throughout April:


- **Virgin Radio 99.9**
- **Move 101.5**
- **AM 1150**

...and more communities to come!

Other Ways to Get Involved

Let others know that April is Parkinson's Awareness Month, and use the hashtag **#MoreThanATremor** on social media to tell your story. Be sure to follow the Society online, and tag us in your April Awareness Month posts:

 **Facebook:**
@ParkinsonSocietyBritishColumbia

 **Instagram:**
@ParkinsonsBC

Win Canucks Tickets!

Also stay tuned to our social media channels for a **chance to win tickets** to the Vancouver Canucks game on April 14!

The above activities are only a sampling of our initiatives. For a complete listing of our **Parkinson's Awareness plans**, and the most up-to-date information, please visit:

www.parkinson.bc.ca/awareness



RESEARCHER

Dr. Nika Shakiba
University of British
Columbia

FUNDING AMOUNT

Scholar Award,
\$450,000 over 5 years
(co-funded through a
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Michael Smith Health
Research BC and
Parkinson Society BC)

Research

Unlocking the Competitive Potential of Pluripotent Stem Cells: Towards Novel Stem Cell Therapeutics

Dr. Nika Shakiba from the University of British Columbia (UBC) is studying human pluripotent stem cells (hPSCs) and their applications for conditions like Parkinson's disease (PD). hPSCs have the special ability to "expand" – make copies of themselves – and give rise to all cell types of the body. Since their discovery over 20 years ago, hPSCs have opened the door to producing cell therapies by transplanting lab-grown cells into the body to restore damaged function.

As a result, hPSCs have received excitement as a substrate to generate cell therapies for degenerative diseases and to replace damaged tissues on-demand. For example, ongoing clinical trials around the world are producing dopaminergic neurons from hPSCs to transplant into patients with PD. Results have shown promise, though further trials are needed. With these clinical trials already underway, clinical demand for hPSCs is growing.

To meet this demand and produce the large quantities of cells needed to treat Canadians, robust biomanufacturing approaches for producing trillions of hPSCs are required, a process called "hPSC expansion". Canada's booming biotechnology sector is strategically positioned to meet this demand. However, current hPSC expansion strategies experience challenges, because lab-grown hPSCs can acquire DNA mutations that make them cancer-like, making these cell batches unsafe for clinical use.

Indeed, like all cells in multicellular populations, hPSCs interact with their neighbours, and differences in the "fitness" of these cells leads fitter cells to out-compete and eliminate their weaker neighbours. hPSCs with cancer-like mutations can eliminate their normal neighbours. Further, "hPSC differentiation" strategies that convert hPSCs into therapeutic cell types (such as neurons) experience bottlenecks in their efficiency and yield, because of the loss of cells that are unable to survive in culture, as well as those that give rise to undesired cell types.

Dr. Shakiba's laboratory at UBC specializes in applying genetic engineering and computational tools to uncover the underlying rules that govern hPSC expansion and differentiation, using this knowledge to create strategies for the production of cell therapies that are safe and cost-effective. Leveraging these tools, her lab works on detecting and removing cancer-like cells in hPSC expansion.

Preliminary results suggest that researchers may be able to predict when hPSCs are going bad in biomanufactured cell batches earlier than they could before, allowing them to intervene to preserve these batches.

Using cutting-edge genetic tools to "barcode" and track hPSCs in culture, her team makes high-resolution measurements of the growth of each individual hPSC. Using computational models, her team can identify cancer-like cells based on their growth properties, regardless of the genetic changes they carry. To preserve the safety of costly hPSC batches, her team is now working collaboratively to improve the design of biomanufacturing platforms in which these cell batches are grown, reducing their risk of going bad. She is also working on developing new genetic tools to remove undesirable cells from batches.

Concurrently, her lab is studying hPSCs during differentiation to specialized cells (like neurons), identifying those that survive and thrive, as well as those that are lost. By genetically programming

hPSCs, they seek to optimize the yield and efficiency with which specialized cells can be produced in the lab, overcoming bottlenecks to make hPSC-derived cell therapies economical and reliable.

The results of this research aim to build on the legacy of Canadian stem cell excellence that began with Drs. Till and McCulloch's discovery in 1961, pushing hPSC-derived cell therapies closer to broad clinical use. Dr. Shakiba's research program is also providing an interdisciplinary training environment, mobilizing the next generation of engineering scientists to build on the Canadian legacy of stem cell research, leading to health and economic benefits for Canadians.

Dr. Shakiba is a biomedical engineer who trained at the University of Toronto and MIT. As an engineer, she is fascinated by the idea of turning cells into fundamentally engineerable units of life by using the latest DNA tools to control their behaviour. She is motivated to make the manufacturing and manipulation of these cells robust so that we can develop cellular therapies to treat degenerative diseases like Parkinson's.

She is also a big believer in outreach and mentorship. Beyond her research and teaching, she is passionate about providing equity in mentorship in scientific training through her latest project, *Advice to a Scientist* (<https://advicetoascientist.com>).

Newsworthy

Upcoming Education & Exercise Events

Tuesdays, April 1 – 29 (no class April 22), from 11:30am – 12:30pm

Voice Aerobics® Online

Join speech-language pathologist Mary Spremulli for this series focused on speech production, with integrated swallowing exercises. Each session includes time for questions on motor, speech, and swallowing symptoms related to Parkinson's. Suitable for anyone with PD or a related diagnosis, as all exercises can be done seated.

Wednesday, April 2, time TBD

Fraser Health Authority's Assisted Living Fall Prevention Symposium

Location in Abbotsford TBD

PSBC's neuro physiotherapist, Shelly Yu, will be presenting a talk on falls prevention for people with Parkinson's. Information on PSBC's resources and support services will be available as well.

Thursdays, April 3 – 24, from 10:00 – 11:00am

April Challenger – Level 3 Online

Let's get moving! Kick-start Parkinson's Awareness Month with PSBC's neuro physiotherapist, Shelly Yu, as she leads you through a fast-paced circuit-style exercise class.

Fridays, April 4 – May 9, time TBD

Mindfulness Sessions Online

Join this webinar with Sara Ahmadian, registered clinical counsellor, to learn how mindfulness can help manage the mental and emotional challenges of Parkinson's disease.

Friday, April 11, from 4:30 – 5:30pm

Prince George Public Library PSBC Info Session

888 Canada Games Way, Prince George

PSBC will be sharing information on our resources and services. Come chat all things Parkinson's and get your questions answered!

Saturday, April 12, from 1:00 – 4:30pm

Prince George Conference

Prince George Conference and Civic Centre, 808 Canada Games Way, Prince George

Join movement disorder specialist Dr. Tara Rastin as she speaks on motor symptoms, neuro physiotherapist Shelly Yu on falls prevention, and speech-language pathologist Jasmine Cload on voice, cognitive communication, and swallowing in this interactive conference. Member pricing available.

Fridays, April 15 – May 13, time TBD

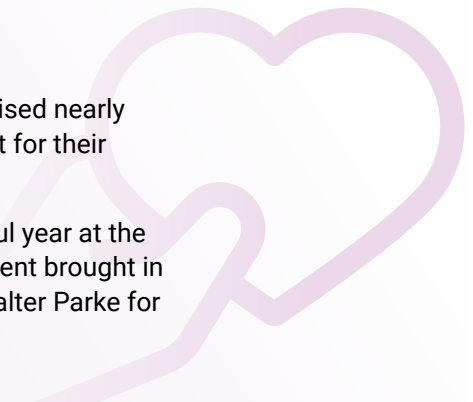
Behavioural Activation Group Online

Feeling low or unmotivated? These common non-motor symptoms of Parkinson's can make it hard to enjoy activities. Join our Behavioral Activation Group to explore strategies for re-engaging in meaningful activities.

Thank You to Our Fundraisers & Donors

The Comox Valley Support Group's annual Burger and Beer Fundraiser raised nearly \$1,800 for the Society. Special thanks to Gail Soliski and Mark Glenwright for their efforts in bringing this event together! Cheers!

A very special thanks to Parke Pacific Projects Ltd. for another successful year at the Agnes Parke Memorial Golf Tournament in Kelowna. This year's tournament brought in \$15,000! As well, we wish to provide a shout out to Stewart Parke and Walter Parke for their contributions.



Wednesdays, April 23 – May 28, from 1:00 – 2:00pm

DopaBeats 🌐 **Online**

This drumming class will allow you to express your feelings with easy-to-follow beats and rhythms, and add drumming to your toolbox of therapies and self-management strategies!

**Thursdays, April 24 – May 29 & June 5 – July 10
(both sessions from 1:00 – 2:00pm)**

SongShine 🌐 **Online**

Unleash the power of your voice! Harnessing the brain, breath, and emotion, SongShine empowers those with Parkinson's through singing, breath work, and creative exercises.

Saturday, April 26, from 10:30am – 2:30pm

Williams Lake Communication & Swallow Workshop

📍 **Ramada Hotel, 1118 Lakeview Crescent,
Williams Lake**

This workshop, led by registered speech-language pathologist Jasmine Cload, addresses communication and swallowing difficulties in individuals with Parkinson's and other neurological conditions. It will utilize clinically proven methods from the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment® to enhance communication. Member pricing available.

Thursdays, May 1 – 22, from 2:00 – 3:00pm

Rock Step Swing Dance – Level 1 🌐 **Online**

Join us for this fun-filled dance class that boosts mental health! Enjoy upbeat music, energetic yet low-impact moves, and a supportive, uplifting environment. Whether you're a beginner or experienced, swing dancing improves balance, coordination, and mood while connecting with others. A partner is encouraged. Modifications are available if needed. Come dance, laugh, and feel great!

Mondays, May 5 – June 2, from 12:00 – 1:00pm

Chair Yoga – Level 1 🌐 **Online**

Join yoga instructor Rheanna for gentle chair yoga sessions designed to warm your body and encourage movement in stiff joints and muscles. This fully seated class will bring awareness to all your limbs, providing you with valuable skills to integrate into your daily routines and morning practices.

Friday, May 23, from 12:30 – 1:30pm

Bonsor Recreation Centre PSBC Info Session

📍 **6550 Bonsor Avenue, Burnaby**

Join Parkinson Society BC for an informal talk on Parkinson's, followed by fun games to challenge you physically and mentally. All are welcome!

Saturday, May 31, from 10:30am – 2:30pm

Cranbrook Communication & Swallow Workshop

📍 **Location TBD**

This workshop, led by registered speech-language pathologist Jasmine Cload, addresses communication and swallowing difficulties in individuals with Parkinson's and other neurological conditions. It will utilize clinically proven methods from the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment® to enhance communication. Member pricing available.

Thursdays, June 5 – July 24, from 5:30 – 6:30pm

Zumba® Gold (Seated) – Level 1 🌐 **Online**

Add some music and movement to your day with this Zumba® adapted exercise class, which is inclusive of all mobility and balance abilities. No dance experience is needed and there are no wrong moves!

Thursday, June 12, from 10:00 – 11:30am

Parkinson's 101

📍 **Confederation Senior's Centre,
4585 Albert St, Burnaby**

Join us for this talk about Parkinson's disease, as well as the supports and resources available to the public.

Saturday and Sunday, June 14 & 15, from 1:00 – 4:30pm

Penticton Regional Conference

📍 **Penticton Lakeside Resort and Conference
Centre, 21 Lakeshore Drive West, Penticton**

Join this interactive and immersive two-day conference, featuring movement disorder specialists and allied health professionals from across BC. Enjoy keynote talks, panel discussions, breakout sessions, and wellness activities, like workshops and massage. Limited spots will be available to locals in the Okanagan region. The conference is also open to anyone across BC if they wish to travel. Member pricing available.

Save the Date

2024 Annual General Meeting

We welcome all members of Parkinson Society British Columbia (PSBC) to join us for our 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) this spring, which will be held virtually.

At the AGM, movement disorder specialist Dr. Daryl Wile will join us to discuss access to treatment and support for those with Parkinson's disease in rural and remote areas.

Non-members interested in attending must sign up to be a member of PSBC, and pay the \$25 annual membership fee at www.parkinson.bc.ca/membership. *Should you wish to obtain more information on becoming a member, please contact:*

Susan Atkinson

Office Manager

satkinson@parkinson.bc.ca · 1-800-668-3330 ext. 263

DATE

Saturday, May 10

TIME

9:30am – 11:30am PT

LOCATION

Online via Zoom

AGM Registration is coming soon! Stay tuned at www.parkinson.bc.ca/agm24



1021 West Hastings Street, 9th floor,
Vancouver, BC V6E 0C3



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