

Assistive technology: what is there and is it useful?



Project information

Lead researcher	Professor Sheila Kitchen
Location	King's College London
Cost	£163,223 over 30 months
Start date	May 2010
Type of project	Project
Project code	G-0913

Project background

Most people with Parkinson's have some trouble with getting around in everyday situations. Slowed movement, rigidity, and tremor are the most common symptoms and these may become worse over time.

Problems coordinating movements can make every day activities like dressing, cooking and washing more difficult. Simple tasks like buttoning a shirt or opening a jar may become time-consuming and frustrating.

About assistive technologies:

- **What are assistive technologies?** Assistive technologies are devices or aids that help people perform daily tasks more confidently, efficiently and safely. For example, people who have difficulty with finger and hand coordination may use a keyboard with large keys or a special mouse to operate a computer.

- **What assistive technologies are available for people with Parkinson's?** A variety of things, such as easy grip cutlery, accessible showers, communication aids, walking sticks and wheelchairs, are currently available. But the majority of the aids available have not been designed specifically for people with Parkinson's, so they may not be meeting the specific needs of people with condition and their carers.

What the researchers are doing

Sheila's project will investigate the assistive technologies available to people with Parkinson's and their carers. How readily available are they? Are they easy to use? Are they safe? And, most importantly, do they actually work?

The research team will talk to 80 couples living with Parkinson's in South East England about the devices or aids they use. Learning from their experiences will help the team work out what devices are most useful for people with Parkinson's, and also to identify any gaps in the range of assistive technologies that are available.

How the research will help people with Parkinson's

This research will help to inform people with Parkinson's, carers and professionals such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists about the range and usefulness of the assistive technologies currently available to people living with the condition.

It will also help to highlight crucial gaps. Understanding more about what people with Parkinson's and their carers need will help us develop better aids that improve everyday life for everyone living with condition.

For more information, please talk to the Research Team

Call	020 7963 9313
Email	research@parkinsons.org.uk
Write	Parkinson's UK, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ