PARKINSON'S UK
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Your patient with Parkinson's: providing evidence to benefits assessors

There are a number of benefits to support people living with a disability or long term condition such as Parkinson's. When your patient with Parkinson's is assessed for these benefits, you may be asked to provide supporting evidence. It's important to know that a diagnosis of Parkinson's doesn't mean someone automatically qualifies for these benefits.

At Parkinson's UK we encourage people with Parkinson's to gather as much supporting evidence as they can from the professionals that know them best.

Why your evidence is important

Your supporting evidence can be the vital difference between someone receiving help or having their benefits taken away.

Decision makers and assessors in the benefits system often have little knowledge of Parkinson's. They are not experts or specialists in conditions.

Decision makers and assessors in the benefits system may not even meet your patient so your evidence is crucial to help them understand how Parkinson's affects people.

We understand you have many demands on your time. So we've provided some key pointers that may help you provide supporting evidence.

Key pointers

Helpful supporting comments about your patient with Parkinson's could include:

- emphasising that there is no cure for Parkinson's and that it is a progressive condition which will only get worse over time
- reporting on the fluctuations and unpredictability of symptoms experienced by your patient, which might include sudden 'freezing' or 'on-off' periods
- commenting on how Parkinson's symptoms can affect your patient, for example, difficulties walking, pain, fatigue, uncontrollable movements, speech or cognitive issues such as concentration or memory problems

- commenting on how long it can take your patient to accomplish tasks or activities related to everyday life such as eating, drinking, cooking, toileting or getting about
- any awareness you have of the intensity of care and support they receive from formal care services or loved ones
- listing medical or therapeutic interventions that you have given or recommended for your patient for pain, fatigue, sleeplessness and anxiety – all commonly associated with Parkinson's – to help demonstrate the complexity of treatment
- commenting on whether your patient has experienced side effects from medication and the effects of these on everyday life
- commenting on whether you have advised the patient to take precautions in everyday life to accommodate their Parkinson's, which may include giving up work or other activities such as driving
- what emergencies, hospitalisation or injuries the patient may have sustained in recent times due to their Parkinson's, for example due to falls

New Style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), is a benefit where the person is judged unable to work. If the following circumstances apply to your patient please stress them for ESA:

- whether you feel obliging someone to return to work, with all that entails, would create substantial risks for that person's physical or mental health, or safety concerns in the workplace. This can include the hazards and challenges associated with travel to work, interviews and appointments
- any evidence that the patient needs physical help or prompting when eating or drinking, or has real difficulty in chewing and swallowing

Example statement of support for an ESA claim

Miss S, 48, has recently been awarded ESA and put into the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG), which implies that she will be able to return to work in the future.

Her GP felt Miss S should be in the Support Group as she is unlikely to be able to work again, and wrote the following statement in support of her appeal. Miss S was successful in her appeal and was placed in the Support Group.

"Miss S takes three or four hours in the morning to 'get going', and experiences severe mobility problems around the house during this period. Her balance is poor. She needs to lean on furniture and fittings as she moves around. She finds it very difficult to cope with daily living tasks. She suffers from dyskinesia (involuntary movements), which means that her ability to undertake manual tasks is unpredictable and she is also in a lot of pain.

"She is immobile for considerable periods every day unpredictably and her level of fatigue means that no task can be undertaken consistently for any predictable period of time. Her concentration is affected by fatigue and could lead to danger for herself and colleagues and possibly for customers.

“She would be completely unreliable in any job that depended on timekeeping – such as coming into work, or working at home, at a particular time or for a particular period.”

For more information

Please do not hesitate to put your patients in touch with Parkinson’s UK for information.

The Parkinson’s UK helpline is experienced in assisting people affected by Parkinson’s on how best to provide information required for disability benefits.

We are also here to help professionals faced with providing supporting evidence and we welcome calls to our helpline with any enquiries you have. Call free on 0808 800 0303. Email: hello@parkinsons.org.uk