

Adapting the Parkinson's Partners Service-Learning Group due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

- Although Parkinson's Disease (PD) is primarily a movement disorder, its psychosocial factors have been found to be among the most important determinants of patient's quality of life.¹
- Social isolation has been an existing problem in the PD population, but this has likely been amplified since the COVID-19 pandemic began.²
- To help alleviate the feelings of social isolation, our "buddy program" paired PD patients with medical students over a virtual platform via Zoom.³

Methods

- Assess the benefit of the Parkinson's buddy program for patients by collecting anonymous pre- and post-program questionnaires via RedCap focusing on quality of life using the PDQ-39 questionnaire.

Results

- Given the limited dataset in our pilot project transition thus far, we present qualitative data on the effectiveness of transitioning a service-based learning group to a remote format.

- With an in-person meeting format, one of the largest challenges is having our partners commute into the city to participate. After transitioning to Zoom, we noticed that people were more easily able to attend, which created more consistent attendance across multiple sessions. Given that the main objective of our program is facilitating conversation, the Zoom platform was able to accommodate this change without a significant interruption.
- Our Zoom-based activities did not differ significantly from our pre-Covid activities. For example, we held a boxing class over Zoom rather than in-person.

Sex	Age	Years Since Diagnosis	PDSI	Social Support Dimension Score
Male	54	4.5	30.1	25.0
Male	55	NR	29.5	33.3
Male	62	30	29.3	50.0
Female	68	10	11.8	25.0
Male	69	1.1	10.9	8.3
Female	71	5.5	21.8	25.0
Male	72	23	32.6	33.3
Male	77	2	26.9	8.3
Male	78	7	26.1	16.7

Conclusion

- Transitioning the Parkinson's Partners program has enabled PD patients to remain connected with other community members through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Future Directions

- Continuing to collect data on a larger patient population to observe quantifiable trends

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