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Parkinson's 'worsens in hospital'

Many patients with Parkinson's Disease get worse when they are admitted to hospital, research suggests.

Parkinson's Disease Society survey of 210 nurse specialists suggests patients have problems as a result of their stay as medication is missed or delayed.

Not one, of the 40% of Parkinson's Disease nurse specialists across the UK who responded, said patients' medicines were guaranteed to be given on time.

The Department of Health said patients missing medication was unacceptable.

Parkinson's Disease patients have a shortage of the brain chemical dopamine, which controls connections between nerve cells, leading to symptoms such as tremors.

They rely on a number of drugs that are tailored and timed to their particular needs.

These stimulate a complex and carefully timed release of chemicals in the brain and control movement

Without these, a person may become very ill and may suddenly not be able to move, get out of bed or walk down a corridor as they could if they were receiving their drugs on time.

Bowel and kidney function can become disturbed and digestion, mood and sleep can also be affected. Some patients will experience severe hallucinations.



Many Parkinson's patients fear they will have to wait for medication

“ We want all hospitals to immediately implement the standards laid down by the Department of Health for medicines management ”

Steve Ford
Parkinson's Disease Society

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Once this careful balance of chemical has been upset it can take days or even weeks for the patient to stabilise enough to be able to get on with their life again.

Listen to patients

Nine out of 10 specialists surveyed by the society said patients experienced clinical problems or unnecessary long hospital stays as a result of missed medication.

The society's chief executive Steve Ford said: "It's completely unacceptable that people with Parkinson's are currently anxious about being admitted into hospitals and care homes across the UK because of a real risk that their Parkinson's will get a lot worse.

"We want all hospitals to immediately implement the standards laid down by the Department of Health for medicines, management and have written to every chief executive within the NHS to ask them if they are aware of what is happening for patients with Parkinson's in their hospital."

He said this was not issue about the number of nursing staff, it was simply about ensuring hospital employees to better understand what happens to people when they do not get their medication on time.

'Unacceptable'

"We urge them to listen to the person with Parkinson's, their carers and their families, as they know exactly how to manage their condition," he added.

The society also wants to see hospital and care home staff given more training on the issue and for patients to have the option to self-medicate if they are able.

A Department of Health spokesman said: "Every patient in a hospital should get the right drug, in the right dose, at the right time. Anything less is unacceptable.

"We have done work on medicine management in the past and shared what we learnt across the NHS.

"As part of the second stage of the National Service Framework for Older People we will be asking watchdogs, nurses and doctors to join together to make dignity - and as part of that medicine management - an absolute priority."

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