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Parkinson's 'missed by doctors'

Doctors and nurses need better training in recognising the early signs of Parkinson's Disease, campaigners have warned.

A Parkinson's Disease Society survey of 180 delegates at its annual conference found 90% said their doctor did not know enough about the condition.

The delegates were representing 17,000 members from around the UK.

The society warned many patients also miss out on the nursing and specialist care that they need.

There are 120,000 people in the UK who have Parkinson's and 10,000 people are diagnosed with the condition every year.

To mark Parkinson's Disease awareness week, the society called for action to improve care for people with the condition.

In a separate development, researchers from the University of Birmingham announced a study of 850 Parkinson's Disease patients aimed at determining which drugs are most effective at treating the condition and least likely to cause side effects.

'Sooner rather than later'

The Parkinson's Disease Society warns that, if doctors fail to recognise early symptoms of the disease, a patient's diagnosis can be delayed and they may fail to receive the appropriate care.

One in five of those surveyed said there was no Parkinson's Disease consultant, such as a neurologist, in their area.

And 85% stated that they had either no local Parkinson's Disease nurse or insufficient



Parkinson's is linked to abnormal movement

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nurse support for their needs.

The PDS called for standards for the care of people with Parkinson's, set down in the National Service Framework for people with long-term conditions, "to become a reality sooner rather than later".

“ GPs are determined to improve care for patients with Parkinson's disease but are faced with competing clinical priorities and a lack of specialist support ”

Dr Mayur Lakhani, Royal College of GPs

Linda Kelly, Chief Executive of the Parkinson's Disease Society, said: "The basic principle of the NSF is that each person should have an individual care plan tailored to their needs.

"This is dependent on the doctor being able to recognise that a patient has Parkinson's, acting as the gatekeeper to services and securing appropriate care and support.

"We are concerned that this will not be the case for the majority of people with Parkinson's until general training is improved and sufficient nurses are employed. "

She added: "Regular exercise has been shown to slow the worsening of the condition and increase mobility.

"However, the physiotherapy and occupational therapy which is essential for keeping people active was only available to half of those questioned."

Dr Mayur Lakhani, chairman of the Royal College of GPs, said: "We welcome this campaign.

"I am sorry to hear of the experience of some patients in this report.

"GPs are determined to improve care for patients with Parkinson's Disease but are faced with competing clinical priorities and a lack of specialist support. A holistic approach is essential."

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