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## Invisible Disabilities

It is estimated that more than 100,000 Australians are living with Parkinson's Disease – and odds on you know of someone who has been affected by Parkinson's. Parkinson's is a progressive disease, so symptoms change over time as the disease progresses. PwP have a range of symptoms, and not everyone has the same symptoms. There is also a difference in symptoms between males and females.

Evidence from people with Parkinson's (PWP) around Australia suggests a lack of information, education and understanding of the condition, symptoms of the disease within the community.

Parkinson's is a socially isolating disease. Many PwP report having had to reduce their work hours or stop work altogether. The majority report feeling socially isolated and alone, and it is not uncommon for people to curtail a range of normal activities such as seeing friends and undertaking their hobbies. Many people report a loss of confidence (Parkinson's Victoria Awareness and Attitudes Report 2017).

Many people don't realise that the demographic of people with Parkinson's is broad, with women representing approximately 48% and early onset Parkinson's often being diagnosed around the age of 40. Many of these people experience difficult social situations of having to explain their disease because of a lack of community awareness around Parkinson's Disease, and especially the young onset group. PWP can live long and impactful lives – with some people living up to 40 years with the disease.

Parkinson's Australia with working with Invisible Disabilities to highlight the need to improve access for people with an invisible or misunderstood disability. The Communication Card and Lanyard initiative is a way to improve community awareness of the many faces of PwP. More importantly, we encourage a Parkinson's friendly community that supports the inclusion of those PwP and understands the different faces of Parkinson's disease.

Warm regards



Jodette Kotz

CEO, Parkinson's Australia