



Neurology Care Line

PADRECC Pathways

Houston Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Center
Vol 10, No. 1, Fall 2011

The VA Caregiver Initiative

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched a comprehensive program for Caregivers of Veterans who need assistance due to illness or disability. There are number of programs Veterans and their Caregivers might qualify for such as adult day health care, home based care, and respite care to give the Caregiver a break from the daily routine. Trained professionals at the VA can help you find the type of support specific to your needs. Call the VA Caregiver Support line at **1-855-260-3274** to see what the VA has to offer, assess what services you might be eligible for, connect you with the Caregiver Support Coordinator at the VA Center nearest you, and just listen to your concerns. The website (see box below) contains a wealth of information.

Learn about yourself and recognize your limits. It's okay to ask others for help. Family, friends, neighbors, volunteers and professional Caregivers can assist with tasks such as dressing, transportation, feeding, medical or personal care, grocery shopping, housework and meal preparation or provide you with respite care or time off.

There are a number of organizations and websites that offer information and educational materials. The National Parkinson Foundation has a helpline (1-800-473-4636) and website fore Caregivers: www.parkinson.org/caregivers.aspx NPF.

The National Alliance for Caregiving also has a website: <http://www.caregiving.org/>. Other websites include: <http://www.caregiver.com/>; <http://www.familycaregiving101.org/>; and <http://www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving/>. For a comprehensive list of resources, type "caregiver" into Google or Yahoo.

VA Caregiver Support

Call 1-855-260-3274

or go online at

www.caregiver.va.gov

Saturday, December 10, 2011

A Caregiver Conference: Practical Aspects of Parkinson's Care

Sponsored by PADRECC and the Houston Area Parkinson Society
call [713-626-7114](tel:7136267114) for details

What Is a Caregiver?

- A spouse, family member, or person or professional who assists a Veteran with daily activities.
- A Caregiver is someone who cares for an aging, ill, injured, or disabled Veteran.
- Duties range from occasional errand-running to giving 24-hour live-in support.
- The Veteran being cared for may live at home or in an assisted living situation.
- Caregiver duties change over time.
- A Veteran may need only occasional help now and more assistance later on.

Exercises for the Legs: Part 2

Part 1 of this 2 part series identified stretches and movements that should be done while sitting in a firm chair, while Part 2 will identify exercises best done in a supported standing position. They should be done at least once daily with **Enthusiasm** and **Effort** while remembering to keep **Safety** as your constant companion.

Side kicks for the hip muscles – Stand facing a surface you can use for support such as a sturdy chair or kitchen counter. Bring your weight onto your L leg and balance on it while lifting your R leg straight out to the side. Hold your R leg out to the count of 5 and then slowly bring it back in the direction of the L leg. Do *8-10 repetitions* of this hip side kick exercise with the R leg and then switch to do *8-10 repetitions with the L leg* (will require that you now stand and balance on the R leg for the L side to kick out).

Back kicks for the hip muscles – Stand facing a firm/supportive surface to assist with your balance. Bring your weight onto your L leg and lift your R leg straight backwards by using the buttocks' muscles. Hold your R leg back to the count of 5 and then slowly bring it forward in the direction of the L leg. Do *8-10 repetitions* of this hip back kick exercise with the R leg and then switch to do *8-10 repetitions with the L leg* (will require that you now stand and balance on the right leg in order for the left side to kick backwards).

Squatting for the knee muscles – To work the thigh muscles, do *8-10 slow consecutive squatting exercises* as follows: Stand beside a firm surface and support your balance with either your R or L hand (both hands can be used if necessary, but be sure you have room in front of you to bend your knees without bumping into something).

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart and then slowly bend down as if you are going to sit. Stop the movement with your knees bent about 60 degrees and then stand up again.

2. Repeat these squatting movements *5-8 times* for leg strength and balance coordination.

Ankle exercises in standing – Stand facing a surface where you can support yourself with both hands. Lean slightly back onto your heels and lift your toes up toward your nose while contracting the muscles on the top side of your ankle. Bend at the hips and let your upper body lean forward slightly over the balls of your feet while contracting the muscles on the back side of your calf to lift your heels from the floor. Repeat moving forward and back through your ankles *5-8 times* as you alternately use the muscles on the front side of your feet and those on the back side of the ankles.

If you feel energetic, add some “ankle pumps” as follows: Lift up onto the balls of your feet, with your heels off the floor as high as possible. Now rapidly drop down to bring your heels to the floor and immediately push off again to lift them up. This is not a rocking, but just the up and down motion of the ankle. Push quickly up and down while counting “1 and 2 and 3 and 4...to 20.” You should feel your calf muscles “burning” which is the perfect time to stretch.

Stretching the calf muscles in standing – What better way to complete a series of exercises than to stretch out stiff muscles? The muscles to target while standing are the calf muscles or gastrocs, which run along the back side of your lower leg from above your knee to the back of your ankle. Keep your knee straight while leaning forward over a bending ankle.

1. Begin by standing facing a firm and stable surface. Take a step back with your R leg and get the heel flat on the floor behind you by bending your knee forward.

2. Bring your weight forward onto the bent L knee by keeping your trunk straight and leading with your hips. This is called “lunging” which you do while keeping your R heel down. Lunge forward to the point of feeling the stretch in your calf muscles and hold to a slow count of 5.

3. To come out of the lunge position, straighten your L leg while shifting your weight back toward the R leg, which will relieve the stretching feeling. Repeat the lunging movement forward 3 to 5 being sure that your R foot is behind your L foot each time.

Exercises for the Legs: Part 2 (Cont'd)

4. **Shift** to the other side so that you'll be lunging onto your R leg 3-5 times with your L foot behind you and your heel flat on the floor. Finish all exercise sessions by taking 2-3 deep breaths while lifting and circling your arms as follows: Stand tall with both arms in front of your waist. Begin and continue to inhale as you move your arms straight overhead, reaching toward the ceiling. At the peak of your reach, start to bring the arms out to the side and behind the back in a big arching movement that lowers the arms as you breathe out again. Breathing large is good for you, but when you add the arms to the activity you are maintaining range of motion and flexibility for the trunk and arms. Thus, the perfect end to a perfect exercise session.

Betty MacNeill, PT, DPT

Associate Professor, Texas Woman's University School of Physical Therapy

(The above information is for educational purposes only and should not be considered as medical treatment or health-care advice. Readers should consult their own physician for individualized medical treatment and a physical therapist for individualized exercise programs.)

Dr. Naomi Nelson Retires

Naomi Nelson, RN, PhD, PADRECC Co-Associate Director of Education and Associate Professor of Neurology at Baylor College of Medicine, retired in September. Dr. Nelson has been with the PADRECC since its inception in 2001 and has developed a Houston patient education curriculum that has been heralded as a model program for the VA. Her many accomplishments include the development of a comprehensive patient/family education program, the Quarterly PADRECC Patient and Family Forums, the Patient/Family Support Group, and preparation and compilation of a wide variety of patient Parkinson's disease (PD) educational materials and brochures. She has been an active member of the VA PD Consortium Network and helped organize PD specialists at VA hospitals within our sphere of responsibility into a Movement Disorder Consortium. Dr. Nelson, a featured speaker on PD, dementia, caregiver Issues, and gerontology throughout the United States, devotes her free time as a volunteer for community education programs. She and her husband Phil are also active in their church and hope to devote some time to travel, gardening meditation, and family. Her legacy to the Parkinson's community is the continuation of her programs. For information about the PADRECC Monthly Support Group contact Shawna Johnson, RN, Clinical Coordinator, at 713-794-8410 and for Patient/Family Forums, Marilyn Trail, PADRECC Associate Director of Education, 713-794-7287.



Dr. Naomi Nelson is both a registered nurse and counseling psychologist.

Community Resources for Veterans with Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson Foundation of Harris County (PFHC) offers weekly free yoga, tai chi, speech and exercise therapy classes, and twice monthly music therapy facilitated by registered therapists as well as monthly forums. Well-known Parkinsons experts from the Texas Medical Center and community present lectures and answer questions the 3rd Friday of each month. Educational materials, a lending library, and counseling support groups are also available. For more information call **713-552-0858** or check the website. <http://pfhc-sc.org>

The Houston Area Parkinson Society (HAPS) expanded its city-wide programs (speech, exercise classes, Tai Chi, support groups, water exercise) to include dancing and singing classes. HAPS has also partnered with the Houston Ballet to offer an innovative, collaborative dance program for people with PD led by a former principle dancer of the ballet. To find out about their many programs and services call **713-626-7114** or check online. hapsonline.org

Dr. Lai Announces Retirement from MEDVAMC Interim Directors Named

Eugene C. Lai, MD, PhD, announced his retirement from the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center and PADRECC in August. Dr. Lai began his tenure at the Houston VA in 1990 and was Director of the Movement Disorder Clinic. In February of 2001, the Department of Veterans Affairs took a major step toward improving care for Veterans with Parkinson's disease by creating six new centers specializing in research, education, and clinical care. Dr. Lai was appointed Director of the PADRECC and has been instrumental in its establishment, growth, and success. Retirement will not slow him down. He remains busy in patient care and research at The Methodist Hospital Neurological Institute, Houston, and as Professor of Neurology and Director of the Neurodegenerative Disease Center. He is also the Robert W. Hervey Distinguished Endowed Chair for Parkinson's Disease Research and Treatment. While we will sorely miss Dr. Lai, we thank him for his dedication and years of service and wish him well in his new endeavors.

Aliya Sarwar, MD, the PADRECC Associate Director of Clinical Care, has been appointed Interim Director of PADRECC. Dr. Sarwar, who is board certified in both neurology and sleep medicine, obtained her medical degree from Dow University of Medical Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan and completed her residency and fellowship at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM). **Gabriel Hou, MD, PhD**, Associate Director of Research, will serve as PADRECC Interim Co-Director. Dr. Hou received his medical degree at China Medical College School of Medicine, Taiwan and his PhD from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York University, where he also completed his residencies. He served his fellowship in movement disorders at BCM. Both Dr. Sarwar and Dr. Hou have been with the Center since its inception and are experienced movement disorder specialists. We congratulate them on their new positions. We welcome **Paolo Moretti, MD**, a neurologist, researcher, and assistant professor of neurology and molecular & human genetics at BCM who joined the Neurology Care Line at MEDVAMC and is seeing patients in our PADRECC Clinics.



Pictured left to right: Gabriel Hou, MD, PhD; Aliya Sarwar, MD; Eugene C. Lai, MD, PhD

Important Date! **Saturday, December 10, 2011**

A Caregiver Conference: Practical Aspects of Parkinson's Care

Rehabilitation specialists will demonstrate and discuss techniques to help those with PD move in bed, rise from a chair, communicate more effectively, perform daily living skills, and discover community resources.

Sponsored by PADRECC and Houston Area Parkinson Society

American Red Cross Building, 2700 Southwest Freeway (Hwy.59)

8:45 am to 1:45 pm

call 713-626-7114 for more information and to register

visit our website

www.Parkinsons.va.gov/Houston

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that Parkinson's Disease has been included as a disease associated with Agent Orange.

For information, go to the VA website at

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/>

or call 1-800-749-8387, press 3

to obtain more information or call 1-800-827-1000

**Parkinson's Disease Research
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