



Neurology Care Line

PADRECC Pathways

Houston Parkinson's Disease Research, Education & Clinical Center

Summer 2020

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VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center

Staying Healthy During COVID- 19

Millions around the globe have been affected by this pandemic with cases still surging around us. This newsletter seeks to increase awareness about COVID 19 and provide guidance with respect to measures for staying healthy and for minimizing the spread of SARs-CoV2 infection in our communities.

Introduction to COVID 19

By: Aliya I. Sarwar, MD

WHAT IS COVID-19:

COVID 19 is an illness caused by a new corona virus called SARS-CoV-2. It belongs to a large family of corona viruses that have been known to cause respiratory illnesses in human for years.

SARS stands for “severe acute respiratory syndrome” suggesting that greatest burden of this disease is on the respiratory system usually in the form of severe pneumonia.

The most likely reservoirs for SARS-CoV-2 virus are bats. Regarding the development of COVID 19 in humans, the widely held belief is that, this virus jumped the species barrier to human using an intermediate animal host. This intermediate animal host has yet to be identified but could be a domestic or a wild animal.

SARS-CoV-2 infection in humans was first recognized in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. Since then, it has spread rapidly around the world. It is transmitted from human to human by droplet and contact routes. In addition, there is some evidence for airborne and fecal-oral transmission. Hence, practicing physical distancing and strict hygienic measures offer the best means of protection against this disease.

HOW IS COVID 19 RECOGNIZED:

A person may not develop any symptoms after a known exposure to SARS-CoV-2. On the other hand, a person without a “known” exposure may develop symptoms. However, those who do develop symptoms generally do so approximately 2-14 days after the exposure to this virus. Symptoms of COVID 19 can range from being mild to severe and include the following:

- Cough
- Cold like symptoms (runny nose, sneezing, sore throat)
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle pains
- Sudden loss of taste and / or smell
- Diarrhea, vomiting or belly pain
- Headache
- Elevated temperature or fever (above 38 degrees Celsius)

WHAT IS COVID-19

On February 11, 2020, WHO announced an official name, causing the 2019 novel coronavirus outbreak, first identified in Wuhan China.

New name: Coronavirus disease 2019, abbreviated as COVID-19. In COVID-19, 'CO' stands for 'corona,' 'VI' for 'virus,' and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as “2019 novel coronavirus” or “2019-nCoV”.

Many types of human coronaviruses; including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses. COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans.

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Citation: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/basic.html#Basics>. Last updated Aug 4, 2020

Lack of recognition of the signs and symptoms of COVID 19 can lead to delay in seeking care and can contribute to inadvertent spread of the infection to others.

Older adults and people with severe underlying medical conditions including diabetes, heart and/ or lung diseases appear to have a higher risk of developing more serious complications from this disease.

Self-Care Practices: What's in your toolkit? Living with PD during COVID-19

Contributor: Bette Cozart, PhD, RN

ADULTS: Emergency COVID-19 Symptoms

Trouble breathing

Persistent pain or pressure in the chest

New confusion

Inability to wake or stay awake

Bluish lips or face

Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms.

Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

*This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility: Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.

Staying Healthy During COVID- 19

Contributor: Beth Boncher, RN

Cleaning

Cleanliness is a very important in making sure that the spread of COVID is kept minimal. The CDC has recommended that the areas that are commonly used be cleaned with soap and water first, then disinfected. Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks are some of the most common areas that need to be disinfected because people use them so often. The EPA has a website for recommended disinfectants to use for different viruses: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>. CDC also recommends that you can use a bleach concentrate solution to clean if it is recommended for the surface that you are cleaning. Solutions with 70% alcohol are recommended as well. Make sure that there is proper ventilation when using these products and if any of these products are being mixed. It is not recommended to mix ammonia and bleach, due to chemical reaction that mixing these can cause. For electronics, remember to use a cloth that is specific for cleaning electronics.

Tips For Staying Healthy

- Clean your hands often. Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Clean all commonly used surfaces, with recommended cleaners
- Follow your doctor's recommendations regarding medications and supplements.
- Practice physical distancing, hence, consider virtual visits with your health care provider instead of face-to-face.
- Maintain good hydration
- Eat healthy diet– talk to your doctor about foods they would suggest to help boost your immunity.
- Exercise regularly in a well-ventilated area
- Get adequate sleep daily.

Staying Healthy During COVID- 19

Caring for Sick People

If you or one of your family members has contracted COVID 19, then it is recommended that the ill person be isolated. This means he/she should stay in one bedroom and use only one restroom. They should strictly avoid physical contact with others in the house. Such households should be disinfected frequently. Sick person's laundry should be handled with gloves, not shaken and, washed it separately from others. Laundry machine should be cleaned afterwards. All utensils should be washed with hot water and disposable gloves.

It is advisable to have an emergency plan ready with regards to daily chores, meals and doctor visits incase you are not there to care for the ill.

Being out in the Community

Use gloves or disinfecting wipes on handles and buttons before you touch them (if available). After fueling, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds when you get home with soap and water. This includes using the ATM, handling deliveries, and take out orders. Virtual (online) shopping is preferable to visiting the store. However, if you have a significant need to visit a store, then you should keep several things in mind:

1. Wear a mask, and if possible, face shield
2. Keep at least six feet away from other people.
3. Avoid touching surfaces or use gloves.
4. Use a credit or debit card in place of cash, if possible
5. Separate and clean/wipe all things bought at the grocery store when you get home
6. Wash your hands thoroughly
7. Wash all fruits and vegetables before putting them away/ eating them.
8. Most importantly, take your time in accomplishing the above mentioned to avoid anxiety and fatigue.

Ordering online is specially recommended for people who are older. Canned food can be very helpful for those who cannot get out of the house and need to store food. An external bin is useful for grocery and package drop offs.

Additional Information: Texas has mandated that everyone wears a mask when outside their home. There are many websites that can be accessed for making these masks. Places to find information about getting surgical masks are Joanns.com, cdc.gov, and other government websites. The CDC has released a video on how to make your own face mask on their YouTube channel and on their website: www.cdc.gov. Other sites also have tutorials on how to make masks, such as joanns.com.

People who cannot have cloth masks:

- Children under 2
- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- People who are unconscious or incapacitated



Photos provided by Andre Quellet on Unsplash.

Staying Healthy During COVID- 19

Mental Health

It is very important for you to have good physical health, but it is even more important to be emotionally healthy. A few tips for emotional well-being during this pandemic:

- Take breaks from watching, listening, and reading the news as this can fuel anxiety.
- Take a walk outside or engage in other relaxing activities like playing board games, yoga, writing in a journal, trying a new recipe.
- Be vigilant about warning signs of emotional stress, these include changes in mood, sleep, eating patterns excessive fear, worry, or anxiety. If you have any of the above symptoms or are simply unsure about how you feel , call your health provider or the VA crisis line to talk about any of these issues: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>, 1-800-273-8255 then press 1. text 838255, and 1-800-799-4889 for deaf and hard of hearing.

COVID-19 Testing

There are several testing sites for COVID-19 in our community. The website for the department of health and human services (<https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus/testing.aspx>) is a good resource to get information about the tests and the testing sites. There are two different types of tests being offered for COVID 19. These are PCR and serology/antibody testing. PCR tests look for pieces of virus in the nose throat or other areas in the respiratory tract to determine if the person is actively infected. In most cases a nasal or throat swab is taken by the healthcare provider and tested at the site or sent to the lab. The antibody/Serology test looks for antibodies against SARS-Co-2 to determine if there was an infection in the past. In most cases a blood sample is taken and sent to the laboratory for testing.. Since, this test shows past infection, it may be helpful, in the future, in determining if people can give blood products (plasma, red blood cells) for those that are COVID-19 positive. For information regarding Coronavirus testing and insurance it is best to contact your insurance company directly and ask them if they cover testing. 2-1-1 is another number to call and find out about low cost or free testing for Coronavirus.

COVID-19 Symptoms

- Shortness of breath/ difficulty breathing
- New or worsening cough
- Sore throat
- Flu-like symptoms
- GI issues- diarrhea, abdominal pain, etc.
- Fatigue
- Sudden loss of taste and / or smell
- Headache

If you have any of the above symptoms, contact your doctor so they can provide guidance to you.

Staying Healthy During COVID- 19

COVID 19 Treatment & Prevention

Currently, no specific anti-viral treatment is available for COVID 19. However, anti-viral drugs that were previously developed for other infections are being tested in COVID 19 patients. One such anti-viral drug is Remdesivir that scientists found to be superior to placebo in shortening recovery time in hospitalized patients with COVID-19 and lower respiratory tract infection.

Researchers around the globe are trying to develop effective therapies. Drugs that are under investigation for COVID 19 include those used to treat malaria and autoimmune diseases. The VA hospitals in Houston and Miami are among the nearly 70 medical sites participating in the international double-blind study on the drug tocilizumab, or TCZ that is used to treat autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis and may reduce inflammation in COVID19.

In addition, plasma containing antibodies from persons who have recovered from COVID 19 (called convalescent plasma) is also being used as a therapeutic option.

However, the good news is that most patients recover without any specific treatment.

General measures for any viral illness are useful in COVID 19 and include:

- Rest with adequate sleep
- Adequate hydration, good nutrition
- Vitamin C, Vitamin D and Zinc supplements may be helpful. However check with your doctor before supplementation.
- To reduce fever and ease aches and pains, acetaminophen is recommended. Be sure to consult with your doctor for approval of dose and directions of use.
- There is some evidence that a steroid medication called dexamethasone may decrease the risk of dying in very ill hospitalized COVID-19 patients. However such medications can only be prescribed by the treating doctors based on the patient's status.

COVID 19 Prevention: Currently, no vaccine is available to prevent COVID 19. However, several countries including the United States are trying hard to develop one.

COVID-19 Related Information Resources

Useful Websites Regarding COVID-19:

<https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus/testing.aspx>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html>

<https://vaww.houston.va.gov/services/medical/infectctrl/N-coronavirus.asp>

https://healthcare.utah.edu/healthfeed/postings/2020/04/homemade-cloth-face-masks_web.pdf

Self-Care Practices: What's in your toolkit? Living with PD during COVID-19

Contributor: **Bette Cozart, PhD, RN**

COMPARISONS: COVID-19 vs. FLU Symptoms

COVID-19	FLU Symptoms
<p>People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus.</p>	<p>Influenza (flu) can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Flu is different from a cold. Flu usually comes on suddenly. Typically, a person develops symptoms anywhere from 1 to 4 days after infection.</p>
Fever or chills	Fever* or feeling feverish/chills (*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever).
Cough	Cough
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing Sore throat	Sore throat
Congestion or runny nose	Runny or stuffy nose
Fatigue Muscle or body aches	Fatigue (tiredness) Muscle or body aches
Headache	Headaches
Nausea and/or vomiting; Diarrhea	**some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.
* New loss of taste or smell	
* Blood clots in the veins and arteries of the lungs, heart, legs or brain	

Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/keyfacts.htm>; <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/lu-vs-covid19.htm> (Last Updated Aug 4, 2020)
Accessed: August 28, 2020

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>. Accessed: August 28, 2020

Self-Care Practices: What's in your toolkit? Living with PD during COVID-19

VA IMMUNIZATIONS

As the influenza (flu) season is bearing down upon us, you may want to consider the following VA Immunizations recommended for you: Influenza, Pneumococcal disease, Shingles (Zoster), Pertussis, Hepatitis A & B, and HPV. As always, consult your provider as to the appropriateness of each shot. Consider your history of allergies, as immunizations are usually derived from animal products. For example, the vaccine Zostavax used for shingles protection is derived from porcine gelatin. Also, you may consider consulting your pharmacist regarding potential interactions with your PD medications. Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that can enter the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. There are two main types of human flu viruses which are Types A & B, that are responsible for seasonal flu epidemics each year. Flu prevention by getting the flu shot is the best way to prevent flu as recommended by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). CDC recommends either the trivalent flu shot which is made using an adjuvant (an ingredient that helps create a stronger immune response), or a high-dose influenza vaccine (Fluzone High-Dose) for people aged 65 years and over. Please consult your provider which flu shot is more effective for your protection.

SELF-CARE: GET YOUR VA IMMUNIZATIONS

My HealtheVet VA Immunizations:

Influenza (flu)

Pneumococcal disease

Shingles Zoster (shingles)

Pertussis (whooping cough)

Hepatitis A & B

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

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Citation: <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/my-healthevet-va-immunizations-learn-more>

Self-Care Practices: What's in your toolkit? Living with PD during COVID-19

SLEEP

You may want to ask the question; “How Much Sleep Do I Really Need? Interestingly, most sleep experts answer this question after asking you about your perception pertaining to your sleep quality. If your sleep is of good quality enabling you to wake up feeling rested and energized, you may not really need to extend your sleep time or try to get the “ideal” eight hours of sleep a night. Sleep quality and quantity may also depend on other factors; such as daytime activities, amount of medications you routinely consume, food intake, caffeine, energy or alcoholic drinks, and health conditions, such as; depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and other sleep-related ailments. Consult your doctor a sleep medicine provider to get more guidance that is customized to your case.

SELF-CARE: SLEEP TIPS FOR PD PATIENTS

- Keep a regular sleep schedule, going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.
- Take sedating medication late enough in the day so that you don't get an increase in symptoms as you are trying to sleep.
- Use satin sheets and pajamas to help with getting in and out of bed.
- Minimize beverages before bedtime to help avoid nocturia (frequent nighttime urination).
- Get exercise and exposure to light early in the day.

Citation: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/parkinsons-disease-and-sleep>
Updated July 28, 2020

Self-Care Practices: What's in your toolkit? Living with PD during COVID-19

EXERCISE

It has been said that exercise is like a “drug” itself. It boosts immunity and contributes to your overall good health. Exercise should be an essential part of your daily regimen. Walking is by far the best exercise for PD, however other physical activities are also beneficial. Studies have shown that greater intensity movements may provide superior benefits. However, when you start any exercise program, consult with your provider or your health care team. They can recommend physical activities tailored to your stamina, balance, and overall health status.

SELF-CARE: TIPS FOR EXERCISE

- Exercise consistently. PD participants enrolled in exercise programs with durations longer than six months, regardless of exercise intensity, have shown significant gains in functional balance and mobility as compared to programs of only 2 or 10 week durations.
- Greater intensity exercises may have greater benefits. General advice: 1 hour a day 3-4 weekly. Experts think that the more you do, the more you benefit.

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Citation:
<https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Treatment/Exercise/Neuroprotective-Benefits-of-Exercise>

SELF-CARE: TIPS FOR EXERCISE

- Intense exercise is exercise that raises heart rate and makes you breathe heavily. ex. running and bicycle riding, but experts feel that other intense exercise should provide the same benefit.
- Always stretch, warm up and cool down properly.
- Exercise in a way that is safe for you. Know your limits.
- Consult MD, therapists and support groups for individual exercise program.

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Citation:
<https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Treatment/Exercise/Neuroprotective-Benefits-of-Exercise>

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EXERCISE

SELF-CARE: EXERCISE BENEFITS

- Exercise can improve gait, balance, tremor, flexibility, grip strength and motor coordination. Ex. treadmill training and biking have all been shown to benefit, along with Tai Chi and yoga.
- Engaging in any level of physical activity is beneficial, as opposed to sedentary — associated with improved motor symptoms.
- For mild to moderate PD, targeted exercises can address specific symptoms for example: aerobic exercise improves fitness, walking exercises assist in gait, resistance training strengthens muscles.
- One study showed that twice-a-week tango dancing classes helped people with PD improve motor symptoms, balance and walking speed.
- Exercise may improve cognition, depression and fatigue, research is promising.

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Citation: [https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Treatment/Exercise/Neuroprotective-Benefits-of-Exercise:](https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Treatment/Exercise/Neuroprotective-Benefits-of-Exercise)

SELF-CARE: EXERCISE BENEFITS

- One study showed that twice-a-week tango dancing classes helped people with PD improve motor symptoms, balance and walking speed.
- Exercise may improve cognition, depression and fatigue - research is promising.

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Citation: [https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Treatment/Exercise/Neuroprotective-Benefits-of-Exercise:](https://www.parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Treatment/Exercise/Neuroprotective-Benefits-of-Exercise)

Self-Care Practices: What's in your toolkit? Living with PD during COVID-19

PRACTICING RESILIENCE

Vince Lombardi, an American professional football coach famously said; “Winners **never quit**, and quitters **never win**.” He was known to have that steely determination to win. Resilience is the ability to deal with setbacks, barriers, or limited resources. Resilience is a measure of how much **you** want something and how much **you are** willing, and able, to overcome impediments to get it. It has to **do** with your emotional strength and mental agility – the will to survive and live life. To never give up - with the day-to-day and mundane grinds of living. To live in the moment and just being thankful. Take a moment to breathe in and pause – and look outside your window and appreciate nature – the sun, the sky, the rain. What are you grateful for in this moment (here & now)? Whom are you grateful for in this moment? Is there someone that comes to mind – perhaps you may want to call or text?

SELF-CARE: TIPS FOR GRATITUDE PRACTICES

1. Appreciate yourself. Practice self-compassion.
2. Start/keep a Gratitude Journal.
3. Thank someone important to you in person/text/phone call.
4. Allow yourself to be happy. Chase negative thoughts away.
5. Identify/seek out a support buddy/partner or group.

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SELF-CARE: PRACTICING SELF-COMPASSION

Power of positivity:

- What can I learn from this?
(vs. How could I have been so stupid?!)
- Feel hope and encouragement.
(vs. feeling shame & demoralized)
- Do/try it again. (vs. giving up)
- Don't ever quit.

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Self-Care Practices: What's in your toolkit? Living with PD during COVID-19

RESPIRE for CAREGIVERS: Elizabeth Dole Foundation

"Time Off for Caregivers of Disabled Veterans" (Respite) program is available in Texas until the end of calendar year 2020.

SELF-CARE: RESPITE FOR CAREGIVERS

Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Gives Caregivers of Disabled Veterans Time Off

Partnering with: Department of Veterans Affairs & CareLinx in-home care professionals to offer free respite care to caregivers of disabled veterans.

The Respite Relief for Military and Veteran Caregivers Program gives caregivers 24 hours of respite care from a CareLinx professional to help with bathing, companionship, cooking, exercising, grooming, light housekeeping, medical and medication reminders, mobility assistance, transportation and other activities.

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Citation:
<https://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/2020/08/05/elizabeth-dole-foundation-gives-caregivers-of-disabled-veterans-time-off.html>

SELF-CARE: RESPITE FOR CAREGIVERS

Elizabeth Dole Foundation:

Time Off for Caregivers of Disabled Veterans

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie

"Caregivers charged with caring for our nation's veterans face new challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have become increasingly isolated and are hindered from getting reliable, outside help. This program provides caregivers compassionate and needed relief during this stressful time."

Submit application: Elizabeth Dole Foundation @ [hiddenheroes.org](https://www.hiddenheroes.org)
Foundation: Preeminent organization empowering, supporting & honoring our nation's military caregivers – the spouses, parents, family members and friends who care for America's wounded, ill or injured veterans.

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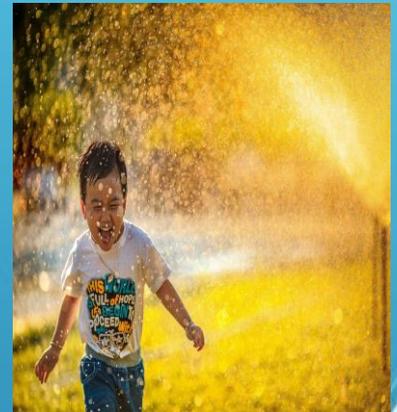
Citation:
<https://www.military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/2020/08/05/elizabeth-dole-foundation-gives-caregivers-of-disabled-veterans-time-off.html>

Self-Care Practices: What's in your toolkit? Living with PD during COVID-19

Contributor: **Bette Cozart, PhD, RN**

REMINDER TO LAUGH!

The Laughing Heart by Charles Bukowski
your life is your life
don't let it be clubbed into dank submission.
be on the watch.
there are ways out.
there is light somewhere.
it may not be much light but
it beats the darkness.
be on the watch.
the gods will offer you chances.
know them.
take them.
you can't beat death but
you can beat death in life, sometimes,
and the more often you learn to do it,
the more light there will be.
your life is your life.
know it while you have it.
you are marvelous
the gods wait to delight in you.



Photos provided by Allef Vinicius, Mi Pham, and Andrew Small
on Unsplash.com.

OUR MISSION:

To support the provision of optimal care for Veterans diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and related movement disorders through professional education, collaboration, and advocacy.

PATIENT AND FAMILY FORUM AUGUST 28, 2020

"STAYING HEALTHY DURING COVID-19"

Presented By: Huberta Cozart, RN, PhD

12:30 PM-1:45 PM (CST)

RSVP: Olga Diverse, RN, (713)794-7842

Houston PADRECC Parkinson's Disease Support Group

When: 1st Thursday of each month **Time:** 12:30 pm – 1:30 pm (CST)

TELECONFERENCE: Dial 800 -767- 1750 , Code 39135 #

For more information please contact:

Olga Diversé, RN, BSN 713-794-7842 or Sally Samuel, RN 713-794-8410

Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Center



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