



Integrated network care for Parkinson's families

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Bastiaan R Bloem is a consultant neurologist at the Department of Neurology, Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Center in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Bastiaan received his MD degree (with honours) in 1993 and completed a PhD degree in 1994 with a thesis entitled 'Postural reflexes in Parkinson's disease'. He studied for these qualifications at Leiden University Medical Centre, the Netherlands, where he also trained as a neurologist from 1994-2000. He has also held fellowships at The Parkinson's Institute, Sunnyvale, California, where he worked with Dr J William Langston and the Institute of Neurology, London, where he worked with Professors Niall Quinn and John Rothwell.

In 2002, Bastiaan was appointed associate professor in neurology at Radboud University Nijmegen with movement disorders as a special area of interest. In 2002 he founded the Parkinson Center Nijmegen (ParC), which aims to provide an innovative, integrated care programme for people with Parkinson's and their families. In 2005, this was recognised as a 'center of excellence for Parkinson's disease' by the National Parkinson Foundation in the United States.

Since 2004, Bastiaan has also co-directed the Nijmegen Motor Unit, a fully equipped gait and balance laboratory, with Professors Jacques Duysens and Sander Geurts. He also serves on the board of the International Society for Gait and Postural Research. He has published over 150 scientific papers and book chapters, and serves as an editorial board member for several national and international journals, including 'Movement Disorders'.

Presentation abstract: Parkinson's is a complex disorder, which involves not only the well-known motor symptoms, such as tremor and bradykinesia, but also a myriad of non-motor symptoms, including depression, sleep disorders and autonomic dysfunction. It is also a progressive condition, which means that with time patients have to adjust to an increasing number of disabilities. Needless to say, this markedly affects the quality of life of patients as well as their families. Current healthcare systems are not optimally designed to meet the vast complexity of Parkinson's. Examples of drawbacks include:

- The often 'monodisciplinary' approach (i.e. medical specialist only)
- The insufficient quality of allied healthcare
- Poor communication and collaboration – between medical specialists and allied healthcare disciplines, and among the latter.

The Parkinson Center Nijmegen (ParC) aims to address these problems by offering an innovative, integrated 'chain care' programme for Parkinson's patients and their families. The concept consists of three complementary elements:

- **A multidisciplinary day care centre:** an individually focused assessment is provided by a dedicated multidisciplinary team of specifically trained health professionals. The team is always tailored to address the specific needs and priorities of each Parkinson's family.

- **ParkNet:** a dedicated regional network of specialised healthcare professionals. These are trained by the centre and work in the community within around 15 minutes travel time of the patients' homes – allowing for treatment delivery in the patient's immediate neighbourhood. The philosophy is that patients receive optimal treatment when they are not arbitrarily referred to any allied healthcare professional, but purposely to one of a limited number of specifically trained staff, who have received dedicated training to optimise their Parkinson's expertise and also work according to evidence-based practice guidelines. They maintain and continue to improve their skills by attracting large numbers of patients and attending continuous follow-up courses organised by the centre. Referral to these professionals has been ascertained by including neurologists working in the surrounding community hospitals in ParkNet and informing them about indications for referral.
- **ParkinsonWeb:** a series of modern information and communications technology (ICT) initiatives to optimise communication among different healthcare professionals as well as between patients and professionals. One element is an informative website for both patients and healthcare professionals. A further component, to be implemented in the near future, will be 'e-health', where patients are offered the opportunity to raise questions and discuss treatment or other issues via email.

This presentation discussed these concepts in more detail and also highlighted some of the centre's ongoing research studies, which aim to evaluate the merits (in terms of efficacy and cost-effectiveness) of this comprehensive approach.

Further reading

1. Bloem BR, van der Marck MA, Munneke M. Seamless Care: patient care in the Netherlands. *European Parkinson's Nurses Network (EPNN) Journal* 2006; 7: 10-11. Available at www.epda.eu.com (Accessed May 2007).