Stage One: Literature Review

Stage one identified 15 evidence-based models with the potential to improve outcomes for people living with Parkinson’s. Analysis revealed the essential components for an effective nursing model of practice for people with PD living in rural and regional areas (Figure below).

Key findings:

- Business case for Parkinson’s Specialist Nurses must include measures of sustainability, equity of access and cost effectiveness.
- Major outcome measures using a prevalence rate model are direct health system costs, loss of productivity, informal care costs, other financial costs and burden of disease.
- Largest costs: acute care and nursing home costs. Indirect costs: lost productivity.
- Major drivers of increased costs: disease progression and maximising QoL.
- Nurse-led management strategies minimising the impact of disease progression and maximising QoL will contain acute and residential care costs.

Stage Two: A two-site case study

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2 sites with participants from each of the 3 groups below.

Consumers and carers at both sites were unanimous in describing the positive impact of the Parkinson’s Specialist Nurse position.

In Coffs Harbour, the position of the Parkinson’s Specialist Nurse was a role linked with the Primary Health Network (PHN) in Coffs Harbour. The position was a full-time position and the position holder was an integral member of a multidisciplinary team of health professionals.

In Shoalhaven, the position of the Parkinson’s Specialist Nurse had been nominally linked with the Primary Health Network (PHN). The position was a part-time position and the position holder was an integral member of a multidisciplinary team of health professionals.

Key Findings

For a Parkinson’s Specialist Nurse to be effective:

- The position must be embedded in the public health system
  - Enables flexibility to work across health care settings and engage with community support organisations such as Parkinson’s NSW.
  - Supports the people living with Parkinson’s across the disease continuum.
- Role requires specialist-level nursing skills
  - Master’s level qualifications, experience in neurological nursing and engagement with professional organisations.
  - Clinical experience enabling provision of direct, comprehensive care.
  - Advanced interpersonal and education skills.
  - Professional leadership skills.
- Research competence.
- Must ensure sustainability of funding for Parkinson’s Specialist Nurses in rural and regional areas.

Conclusion

These research findings have relevance to both the wider Australian context and countries with similar geographical challenges. Parkinson’s NSW is using these findings to advocate for the implementation of specialist Parkinson’s nurse positions in underserved rural and regional locations.