2026 INSIGHT INTO PARKINSON'S PRESENTED BY PDWARRIOR

PARKINSON'S

ONLINE CONFERENCE

11TH - 13TH APRIL 2026

Speaker Program & Notes

Most people with Parkinson's disease are empowered by up-to-date information and a strong community network. The INSIGHT into PD Online Conference serves to address this by providing an informative, inspirational and supportive experience. The Conference has become the largest online conference for people living with Parkinson's, their carers, and health professionals.

PD Warrior is a leading global exercise rehabilitation organisation helping people with Parkinson's to live brave and live better with Parkinson's, founded in 2012 by neurological physiotherapist Dr Melissa McConaghy.

Each year, PD Warrior hosts the INSIGHT into PD Online Conference, a FREE online education resource (with paid premium access products) showcasing Parkinsons' latest research, academics, and lived experiences – providing vital information and support for the community.

Day One and Two are for people living with Parkinson's and their carers. Day Three is specifically designed for Health Professionals. We hope you enjoy the Conference.

Day 1 - Research Updates

Dr Simon Stott

Research Focused on Disease Modification for Parkinson's in 2026

2026 represents a very interesting year for Parkinson's research. In addition to the initiation of several major new projects, there will also be the announcement of results from large clinical trials that have been testing some of the key hypotheses underlying our current understanding of the biology driving disease progression. After two decades of investigating these biological pathways and developing therapies that target them, we will finally be learning if our theories are correct and modulating certain targets can help to slow/halt the disease.

Notes:

A/Prof. Nicolas Phielipp

Stem Cell and Gene Modulation Therapies in Parkinson's Disease

There have been recent advances in the field of clinical research of stem cell and gene modulating therapies in the field of Parkinson's disease. These second wave of trials have been successful in phase 1 and are moving to phase 2 and phase 3 clinical trials. These attempts are mostly directed at protecting or restoring dopamine function, but may have other beneficial effects.

Notes:

Dr Michael Li

Disease-Modifying Treatments for Parkinson's Disease; Are We There Yet?

Current therapies for Parkinson's disease are aimed at reducing motor and non-motor symptoms. While treatments that slow disease progression (i.e. disease-modifying treatments) are yet to be realised, research in this area is moving rapidly with particular interest in targeting the underlying disease biology of Parkinson's. This presentation aims to provide a framework for understanding treatment strategies that aim to alter the natural course of Parkinson's, such as neuroprotective and regenerative therapies. Within this framework, emerging disease-modifying treatments are reviewed, highlighting recent evidence and limitations across new and re-purposed medications as well as gene and cell-based therapies. These advances towards disease-modifying treatments offer optimism that future Parkinson's treatment will become more personalised as we improve our ability to alter the biological drivers of progression.

Notes:

Day 1 - Research Updates

Prof. Charalampos "Haris" Tzoulis

The battle for a cure in Parkinson's disease: a new era of clinical studies

Despite major efforts around the world, we still do not have treatments that can slow or stop Parkinson's disease. Progress is delayed by the fact that new medicines are usually tested one at a time, in separate trials that take many years and have a very high cost. Additionally, many drugs move into large studies before we know enough about whether they can reach the brain and affect the disease in the intended way.

In this talk, I will present two Norwegian clinical trial platforms designed to improve this process. The first, SLEIPNIR, is an early-stage trial platform that can test several potential treatments at the same time using one shared placebo group. Each treatment is studied in a smaller number of participants, but with very detailed testing, including spinal fluid samples, brain scans, and digital measurements from wearable devices. This helps us learn more quickly whether a treatment appears safe, reaches the brain, and affects important disease-related processes, and therefore whether it is ready to move forward to larger studies.

The second platform, HYDRA, is designed for larger and later-stage studies. Like SLEIPNIR, it can test several treatments in parallel against a shared control group. It is also built to stop testing treatments early if they are not working, or to move more quickly if results are promising.

Together, SLEIPNIR and HYDRA create a novel pathway for testing new Parkinson's treatments more efficiently, from early studies to larger trials. I will explain how these platforms work, what they are testing now, and how biomarkers can help us measure whether treatments are affecting the body and brain. This approach may help bring better treatments to patients faster, while also making research more efficient and strengthening collaboration across centers and countries

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Notes:

Day 1 - Exercise - Gait and Mobility

Dr Lina Goh

Integrate: A Multidomain Fall Prevention Program

Falls are common in people with Parkinson's disease and can lead to injuries, reduced quality of life, and increased healthcare costs. Exercise can reduced falls in people with mild to moderate Parkinson's by 26%, but even with effective exercise intervention fall rates remain unacceptably high. Furthermore, exercise with minimal supervision may increase falls in people with more advanced disease.

Notes:

Prof. Jane Alty & Prof. Michele Callisaya

Dystonia in Parkinson's: A Conversation with Michele Callisaya – Research, Lived Experience and What It Means for You

An accessible introduction to dystonia in Parkinson's, combining expert insight and lived experience to help you better understand symptoms, why they occur, and what can help.

Notes:

A/Prof. Daniel Peterson

Recent Advances in Therapeutic Approaches for Gait and Mobility in People with PD

There have been a number of recent advances in approaches to treat mobility challenges in people with PD. As such, this talk will provide a brief survey on recent advances in several therapeutic domains for improving gait and balance in people with PD. In particular, the talk will discuss the state of evidence for several types of therapy, such as pharmacologic, physical rehabilitation, robotics, and neurostimulation for mobility.

Notes:

Day 1 - Lifestyle & Support

Prof. Michael Okun

The Parkinson's Universe: A New Model of Care

Parkinson's disease is now the fastest growing neurodegenerative disorder in the world, yet many people still face fragmented and difficult-to-navigate care systems. In this plenary session, Professor Michael S. Okun introduces the "Parkinson's Universe," a new framework that reimagines Parkinson's care using the metaphor of a solar system. In this model, the person living with Parkinson's sits at the centre, like the sun, with caregivers, healthcare professionals, social supports, and specialists forming a coordinated orbit around them.

Notes:

Prof. Connie Marras

Quality of Life in Parkinson's Disease: Measuring What Matters

This presentation will discuss:

- How people living with PD define quality of life,
- What determines quality of life for people with PD, and
- How we measure quality of life and how it aligns with how people with PD consider it should be measured.

Notes:

Tiffany Stott

Dance for Parkinson's Scotland

Scottish Ballet is an International Centre for Dance Health, dedicated to improving lives through the delivery of specialist dance health programmes, research, education, and training. Central to the SB Health initiative Scottish Ballet's three neurological dance health programmes include Dance for Parkinson's Scotland, Dementia-friendly Time to Dance®, and SB Elevate® for people living with multiple sclerosis.

Notes:

Day 1 - Promoting Physical Activity

Dr Allyson Flynn

Working with People with Parkinson's to Co-design an Online Exercise Self-Management Program

Exercise offers significant benefits for people with Parkinson's, yet starting and maintaining long-term exercise remains challenging. Building exercise self-management skills and confidence is essential for sustained engagement. This project aimed to co-design an online exercise self-management program, incorporating behaviour-change techniques to support exercise uptake and habit formation. A series of focus groups and interviews were held with people with Parkinson's to inform the development and design of the website.

Notes:

Dr Jennifer Cartwright & **Ms Jo Dawson**

How to Get Started and Keep Going: Tips to Create Lifelong Physical Activity Habits for PD Warriors

Staying active with Parkinson's is one of the most powerful ways to support your brain, body and long-term wellbeing — but knowing where to start (and how to stay consistent) can be challenging. This practical and engaging session will guide you through finding your personal "why" for movement, exploring the types of physical activity that suit you, and setting meaningful short- and long-term goals.

Notes:

Dr Miriam Van Emde Boas

What Interventions Focusing on Decreasing Sedentary Time Could Mean for the Management of Parkinson's Disease

PD is a chronic neurodegenerative disease for which currently there is no cure. Current therapies focus on mitigating symptoms and the progression of the disease. With L-Dopa still being the gold standard of treatment, many years of research have given rise to new pharmacological interventions, as well as Deep Brain Stimulation and other technologies. It has also transpired that physical activity, or physical exercise is of undisputed value to the PD patient and might be the only intervention to date able to mitigate the progression of the disease itself.

Notes:

Day 1 - Speech and Swallowing

Dr. Jordanna Sevitz

Protecting Your Airway: Exercises to Improve Swallowing and Cough Function in PD

Key learning outcomes include; 1. Swallowing and cough function are critical to protect the airway and decline together in PD 2. Exercised-based treatments are available and can improve function 3. Expiratory Muscle Strength Training and Cough Skill Training are two specific, device-driven treatments.

Notes:

Laura Langer

The Research Behind SPEAK OUT! & the Power of Daily Home Practice

This presentation explores foundational and new research that supports the SPEAK OUT! therapy Program, emphasizing the critical role of daily home practice in achieving successful speech outcomes for people with Parkinson's. Drawing from clinical studies and real-world outcomes, we will examine how SPEAK OUT! supports improved speech and swallowing function. Attendees will learn how the structure aligns with principles of neuroplasticity, emphasizing the importance of consistent daily practice. We will discuss how home practice in not just an optional supplement to therapy, but a core component of lasting change.

Notes:

Phillipa Clay & Colleen Kerr

Better Conversations with Parkinson's: Research into Having More Successful Conversations

Better Conversations is a speech and language therapy programme that has improved the day-to-day conversations of many people living with communication difficulties. The person living with communication difficulties and a family member or friend work together, coached by a speech and language therapist, to build and develop conversation skills. Research shows it supports both people involved to make changes that can improve wellbeing and quality of life.

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Day 2 - Medical Updates

Prof. Carolyn Sue

Mitochondria and their key role in Parkinson's Disease

Mitochondria play a central role in the pathogenesis of Parkinson's disease, primarily through their involvement in cellular energy production, oxidative stress regulation, and quality control mechanisms. Neurons, particularly dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra, have high energy demands and are especially vulnerable to mitochondrial dysfunction. Impairments in mitochondrial oxidative phosphorylation reduce ATP production, leading to cellular energy deficits that compromise neuronal survival.

Additionally, dysfunctional mitochondria generate excessive reactive oxygen species (ROS), contributing to oxidative stress and damage to proteins, lipids, and DNA. This oxidative damage is a hallmark of Parkinson's disease and exacerbates neuronal degeneration. Mitochondrial quality control pathways, including mitophagy, are also disrupted. Mutations in genes such as PINK1 and Parkin, which regulate the identification and removal of damaged mitochondria, result in the accumulation of defective organelles within neurons. Furthermore, mitochondrial dysfunction is closely linked to the aggregation of α-synuclein, another key feature of Parkinson's disease, creating a cycle of cellular damage.

Overall, mitochondria are essential for neuronal function and are critically involved in the mechanisms leading to neurodegeneration, making them a major focus for understanding and potentially treating Parkinson's disease.

Notes:

Prof Alberto Espay

The New Parkinson's Staging System (NSD-ISS): Does It Hold Up?

This talk will explain the promise and pitfalls of a newly proposed way of describing Parkinson's called the NSD-ISS (for "Neuronal α-Synuclein Disease-Integrated Staging System"). It organizes Parkinson's into "stages" and relies heavily on a laboratory test that looks for clumped forms of a protein called alpha-synuclein.

Notes:

Day 2 - Medical Updates

A/Prof Florin Gandor

Levodopa to Device-Aided Therapies – Treatment Options from Early to Advanced Parkinson's Disease.

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative condition initially predominantly affecting the dopamine transmitter system. Since the 1960s we know the beneficial effect of levodopa on Parkinson symptoms and its effect on quality of life. The disease progression eventually leads to fluctuations of dopaminergic medication, and medication as well as smart therapies are in place to address these symptoms. Prof Gandor's presentation will address the therapy options in early, mid and advanced stages of Parkinson's disease.

Notes:

Dr Namrata Kumari

Proposed Mechanisms of Neuroprotection for Nicotine in Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a neurological disorder that is characterized by the death of dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra. Despite extensive research, the exact cause of PD is unknown, and current treatment options are centered on symptom management rather than disease modification. Most, though not all, epidemiologic studies have demonstrated reduced risk of development of PD among smokers, generating interest in nicotine, a key component of tobacco.

Notes:

Day 2 - Gut, Brain & Nutrition

A/Prof. Christine Ferguson

Nutrition for sleep and Parkinson's

People with Parkinson's disease often experience sleep problems that can be caused or worsened by symptoms and medications. While research on nutrition and sleep in PD is limited, what we eat and drink is known to affect overall sleep quality. This session covers eating timing, diet composition, and sleep-promoting foods for a good night's rest.

Notes:

Richelle Flanagan

Why Diet Matters for People with Parkinson's

Nutrition is an important but often underused part of Parkinson's care yet almost 90% of people do not have access to dietetic care. Parkinson's can affect eating, digestion, and nutritional health, while nutrition can also affect symptoms and wellbeing. Parkinson's medicines can make this more complicated. In this presentation, Richelle shares practical, evidence-based strategies to help people use nutrition to support symptom management, medication, and quality of life.

Notes:

Prof. Brian Bicknell

Five-Year Follow-Up of Photobiomodulation in Parkinson's Disease: A Case Series Exploring Clinical Stability and Microbiome Modulation

This study followed six people with Parkinson's disease over five years while they used a non-invasive light therapy called photobiomodulation (PBM). PBM uses red and near-infrared light applied to the head, neck and abdomen, and has previously been linked to improvements in movement and other Parkinson's symptoms. The study is based on previous pre-clinical and clinical studies that show a relationship between PBM, Parkinson's symptoms and the microbiome.

Notes:

Day 2 - Exercise

Prof. Beth Fisher

Exercise-Enhanced Neuroplasticity in Parkinson's Disease

Is a Professor Emerita of Clinical Physical Therapy in the Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy at the University of Southern California. Dr. Fisher was the director of the Neuroplasticity and Imaging Laboratory primarily using Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) to investigate brain-behavior relationships during motor skill learning and motor control in both non-disabled individuals and individuals with neurologic disorders.

Notes:

Ava Lambert

Raising the Bar: Strength for Parkinson's with PD Lift

PD Lift, a program designed to improve strength, power production, and mobility through range. This program implements PD Warrior principals such as high effort and complexity to bring neuroactive exercise into a gym-based setting

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Notes:

Rachel Rutley

The Importance of Optimal Foot Function in the Context of Balance for People Living with Parkinson's

Balance problems can arise from a range of issues for people living with Parkinson's, including abnormal muscle tone, impaired motor programmes and altered sensory processing. This presentation will outline the role of the foot as a mobile support in balance and discuss the importance of optimising foot function to maintain effective balance and reduce the impact of postural instability. Suggestions for stretching and strengthening the foot in the context of balance will also be considered.

Notes:

Day 2 - Live Brave

Carol Ferrone

Live Brave Panel Discussion hosted by Carol Ferrone

Carol will be the host of the Live Brave panel discussion for the online conference, interviewing and sharing her story, as well as the story of people living with Parkinson's in our global community.

Kim Dahler

Live Brave with Kim

Kim will share her story and journey with Parkinson's in our Live Brave segment.

Notes:

Steven Yellen

Live Brave with Steven - *Living Parkinson's*

Steven Yellen shares his personal journey of living with Young Onset Parkinson's and what it truly means to be "Living Parkinson's." Diagnosed at 55, Steven has transformed his experience into a powerful mission of education, resilience and connection.

Notes:

Dr Maria De Leon

Live Brave with Maria

Maria will share her story and journey with Parkinson's in our Live Brave segment.

Notes:

Ralph Ferrone

Live Brave with Ralph Ferrone - Shaking Not Stirred Documentary excerpts.

Ralph shares his story through a sneak peek of the documentary, Shaking Not Stirred. Produced and featuring Carol Ferrone, Shaking Not Stirred is a deeply moving documentary that invites audiences into a world rarely seen, but urgently needed. This is not just a film. It is a conversation. It is a reckoning. And it is a call to action. At its heart, the film is an intimate portrait of two people — one man living with Parkinson's, fighting daily to stay present in a body that won't always cooperate, and another beside him as advocate, family member, and witness. Through movement, routine, humour, and an unbreakable bond, it captures the quiet battle to slow the disease, protect independence, and hold onto what matters most — while offering insight into current research, the urgency of funding, and the vital work of Shake It Up Australia.

Notes:

Day 2 - Accessing Inclusive Healthcare

A/Prof. Serene Paul

Allied Health Use Among Women with Incident Parkinson's Disease and Associations with Subsequent Residential Care Placement: Population-based Findings from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health

Allied health interventions benefit people with Parkinson's disease (PD) by reducing symptom severity; improving mobility, mood and quality of life; and reducing falls. Allied health may also reduce healthcare costs and mortality. Yet current evidence suggests low and delayed uptake of allied health among people with PD. This presentation will use a population-based study to examine the proportion of people with Parkinson's disease who access allied health, how soon they did so following diagnosis, and whether allied health use may delay residential care placement.

Notes:

Richard Wylie

The National Parkinson's Alliance (NPA) and How They Led the Development of Australia's First National Parkinson's Action Plan (NPAP).

Richard will introduce the National Parkinson's Alliance and describe the process for the development of Australia's first National Parkinson's Action Plan.

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PROGRAM NOTES

WHAT IS PD WARRIOR®

The home of Parkinson's
Exercise | Education | Community

- In-person and online exercise rehab programs to slow your Parkinson's symptoms
- Educational webinars and annual INSIGHT conference to understand your journey with Parkinson's
- Join a thriving global community uniting Warriors to share their PD stories, and goals

FOUNDATIONS

Dr. Melissa McConaghy, Specialist Neurological Physiotherapist and author of the Amazon best-seller **The New Parkinson's Treatment: Exercise is Medicine**, created the innovative PD Warrior program that leverages neuroplasticity to re-train the brain and establish lifelong healthy behaviours.

PD Warrior has been taught to thousands of health professionals worldwide and is licensed in seven countries.

Find your nearest location here: pdwarrior.com/locations/

PROGRAMS

Choose from a range of programs and membership options, tailored to your Parkinson's symptoms, lifestyle, location, and budget.

- PD Warrior PLUS: The largest online Parkinson's exercise community with hundreds of workouts, weekly classes and educational resources.
- 10 Week Challenge: An intensive rehabilitation program available online or in-person, aimed at slowing Parkinson's symptoms.
- Groups or Circuits: Small and intensive in-person classes led by PD Warrior qualified coaches in our licensed facilities.
- 1:1 Private Coaching: Personalised neuroactive exercise programs tailored to your individual goals and symptoms.

Unsure where to start? First find out what type of Parkinson's you have. **Take our Quiz here.**

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PROGRAM NOTES

10 WEEK Challenge

Join the next 10 Week Challenge for Parkinson's

Neuroplastic exercise approach designed to help slow your Parkinson's symptoms

pdwarrior.com/10wc-online/

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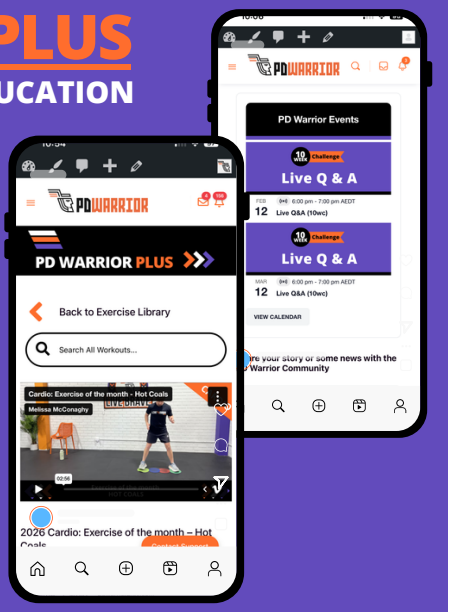

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