



AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES ONLINE PARKINSON'S AWARENESS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR FIRST RESPONDERS AND GENERAL PUBLIC

Unique symptoms of Parkinson's can be mishandled and misunderstood in emergency situations. This new web-based program will educate police, fire fighters and emergency service providers and help save lives.

NEW YORK, NY, January 10, 2017 -- The American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA) has partnered with the Office of Continuing Professional Education (OCPE) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, to provide a web-based, user friendly program for police officers, fire fighters, and emergency medical service providers to help them recognize the unique symptoms and needs of those with Parkinson's disease and enable them to provide the best and most appropriate care.

The Parkinson's Awareness Training program meets the educational goals in Section 4b4 of the New Jersey Parkinson's Disease Public Awareness and Education Act (A-2576.). The statute, signed into New Jersey state law in December 2014, was driven by APDA's New Jersey Chapter and called specifically for the development of an educational program to educate and empower first responders to not only know the signs and symptoms to look for, but also to know how to best treat and care for people living with Parkinson's disease. With a new diagnosis of Parkinson's disease every nine minutes, this training is critically important.

"Parkinson's disease is a life-changing illness whose symptoms are not always easily identifiable," says Leslie A. Chambers, APDA President & CEO. "For example, the slurred speech or balance issues of a Parkinson's patient can often be misinterpreted as alcohol- or drug-related behavior. Or the non-responsive, sometimes expressionless face of someone living with Parkinson's disease, a symptom called 'masking,' can be misconstrued as well." Chambers continues, "We are so proud of this collaboration with OCPE which will bring this program to thousands across the country. While the course is geared toward first responders, anyone can participate and will gain valuable insight about the issues people living with Parkinson's face that will in turn facilitate better care in emergency situations."

The web program is a 1-2 hour course with instructional videos intended to provide overall education on Parkinson's disease and information on protocols for the first responder when interacting with a person who shows the signs of Parkinson's. To date the program has been posted on training websites in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and South Carolina. Other states will be adding the program in the coming year; CEUs may be available through these states' websites.

A non-CEU version of the program is available on the APDA website at:
<http://www.apdaparkinson.org/EMTtrainingcourse/presentation.html>

The New Jersey Chapter of the American Parkinson Disease Association worked for nine years to pass this law. Chapter President, Allan Bleich, a retired police officer of 25 years who was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at age 45, was instrumental in leading the charge. "After my diagnosis I realized that it was vital that first responders be educated about the disease so they could recognize the symptoms

and effectively work with an individual impacted by Parkinson's. For example, an EMT treating someone who has undergone deep brain stimulation (DBS), which is a device implanted in the brain to help combat Parkinson's symptoms, must understand the implications of the device; otherwise the person's life could inadvertently be at stake."

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition that affects more than 1 million people in the United States. Approximately 60,000 people are newly diagnosed each year. Parkinson's is characterized by motor problems including slowness of movement, rigidity, and tremor. A number of non-motor symptoms are associated with Parkinson's, including fatigue, anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance and are often misunderstood by those who are not specifically trained to recognize that these symptoms may be attributed to PD.

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About the American Parkinson Disease Association:

APDA is the largest grassroots network dedicated to fighting Parkinson's and supporting every person and every family impacted by Parkinson's across the country. We offer services, provide education, and fund the most promising research that brings us closer to discovering the cause and finding the cure for Parkinson's disease. To join us in the fight against Parkinson's disease and to learn more about the support APDA provides nationally through our network of Chapters and Information and Referral (I&R) Centers, as well as our national Research Grant Program and Centers of Advanced Research, [please visit us at http://apdaparkinson.org](http://apdaparkinson.org).

About The Rutgers Office of Continuing Professional Education (OCPE):

OCPE provides educational opportunities for adults and adolescents through professional development and certification courses, workplace training, and youth services, and creates online courses, webinars, and educational videos for the State of New Jersey and other non-profit and governmental partners. Each educational program is customized to the goals and learning needs of the target audiences. OCPE has served professionals in public health, emergency preparedness, and healthcare for more than 50 years by presenting targeted, focused continuing-education programs and technical services.

To learn more about us, visit OCPE at www.cpe.rutgers.edu or contact Emily Carey PerezdeAlejo, by email (eicarey@njaes.rutgers.edu) or phone (848-932-7184).