

# NEUROLOGY UNIT

**Neurology** is the specialist branch of Medicine that deals with the nervous system. This includes the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerves and muscles. The special senses of smell, vision, hearing and balance also often involve neurologists usually overlapping with ophthalmologists (eye specialists), and Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) surgeons. Patients with problems with their nervous system are often treated in the Neurology Unit of the hospital.

## EQUIPMENT

- CT scanners
- MRI scanners
- Other interventional radiology apparatus

## PERSONNEL

- Neurosurgeons
- Neurologists
- Radiographers
- Neurologic Care Nurses

## CONVERSATION IN THE NEUROLOGY UNIT

Patient: Hello! I'm Mr. Saunders. I have an appointment with Dr. Farr at 10AM.

Nurse: Hello, Mr Saunders. You're just right in time. Dr. Farr is waiting for you at the office.

Patient: Thank you.

Doctor: Good day, Mr Saunders. I checked your record earlier and it says that you have been previously diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and you're here for a second opinion.

Patient: Yes

Doctor: Alright. Based on the assessment of your initial health care provider, you manifested almost all of the signs of the disease. Unfortunately, there are no lab tests that can diagnose Parkinson's disease yet as of the time being. There is no screening test for this disease. I will instead do my own assessment and if I ever get the same results as with your previous health care provider, I would refer you to a neurologist. In that case we will be able to control your symptoms accordingly. As you may have known already, Parkinson's doesn't have a known cure yet.

Patient: Can you please tell me again what this disease is all about? I didn't quite get it the first time they told me.

Doctor: Sure. This disease is usually associated with old age. It most often develops after age 50. It affects both men and women. In some cases, this disease runs in families. Parkinson's disease occurs when the nerve cells in the brain that make dopamine are slowly destroyed. Without dopamine, the nerve cells in that part of the brain cannot properly send messages. This leads to the loss of muscle function. The damage gets worse with time. But exactly why these brain cells waste away is unknown. It's like a chemical in your brain has gone rogue.

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Patient: I see. Can you tell me some of the symptoms of this disease?

Doctor: Typically with Parkinson's, patients experience mild symptoms at first. For instance, you may have a mild tremor or a slight feeling that one leg or foot is stiff and dragging. Symptoms may affect one or both sides of the body, and can include slow blinking, constipation, difficulty swallowing, drooling, problems with balance and walking, no expression in the face (like you are wearing a mask), muscle aches and pains and movement problems. Rigid or stiff muscles, often beginning in the legs can also be experienced with this disease. Others include shaking, called tremors, slowed, quieter speech and monotone voice, stooped position, low blood pressure when getting up, sweating and lack of body temperature control. These problems are due to something called autonomic dysfunction.

Patient: Wow that's a lot to take.

Doctor: I know. This might be overwhelming to you but do you still want me to proceed with the assessment?

Patient: Yes, I want to really know what's going on with me.

Doctor: Okay then. Let's go to the assessment room so you'd be more comfortable.