

NPF Mentoring Program Gives Parkinson's Professionals Tools to Succeed

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Caring for Parkinson's patients is complex, yet some health care professionals just starting out are rarely given the coaching they need to master their job.

That's something the National Parkinson Foundation (NPF) aims to change with a new program—the NPF Mentoring and Networking Program. This mentorship will help new center coordinators throughout the NPF Centers of Excellence (COE) network acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.



“In today’s workplace, particularly busy NPF Centers of Excellence, mentoring may be more important than ever as we often take on job duties with little or no training,” said Christine Hunter, RN, BSN, Center Coordinator and Director of Clinical Research at the Parkinson’s Disease Center and Movement Disorders Clinic, Baylor College of Medicine, an NPF Center of Excellence.

Center coordinators are pivotal members of the Parkinson’s care team, acting as liaisons between NPF, the COE team and patients, their families and caregivers. The relationship they forge with Parkinson’s team members, patients and NPF is key to the delivery of high-quality Parkinson’s care.

The mentorship lasts for six months. New center coordinators will be matched with a mentor by members of the NPF’s Committee Task Force. The mentoring program was developed through the hard work of members on this committee and inspired by recommendations that came out of NPF’s annual COE Conference. Many conference attendees cited mentoring as a missing part of their training.

“At the annual COE meeting, colleagues learn a lot from talking to each other and return to their centers recharged and armed with strategies, so our goal was to duplicate that energy throughout the year,”

said Committee Task Force member Pamela R. Palmentera, LCSW, a Coordinator and Clinical Social Worker at Northwestern Parkinson’s Disease & Movement Disorders Center, an NPF Center of Excellence.

Many center coordinators work independently and autonomously. The program aims to help the coordinators connect with the larger Parkinson’s care community, get informed about current NPF resources available to patients, caregivers and professionals, and stay informed on the latest Parkinson’s research.

NPF seeks to help these health care professionals in the Parkinson's community get the professional guidance and knowledge they need to grow and succeed in their field.

"I think there is something very positive about networking. For example, if someone has invented a short cut and we share it, it's beneficial. This way, instead of reinventing the wheel, we can glean the best from other people," Palmentera said. "When I interact with other disciplines it helps me to expand my paradigm and my knowledge base. And that will translate into better care for patients."

The NPF Mentoring and Networking Program is launching at five COEs this fall. In 2016, NPF will be rolling out the program to all 41 Centers of Excellence. Introducing the concept of mentorship has gotten very positive feedback, thus far.

"This program will enhance the quality of care and provide the COE coordinators with the necessary support they need for all they do," Hunter said. "We all come to our positions as center coordinators from a variety of professional experiences. NPF's mentoring program will build on this cumulative knowledge base to support everybody in providing the most knowledgeable, comprehensive and compassionate care to all those we serve in the Parkinson's community."

For more information about NPF's Mentoring and Networking program, visit www.Parkinson.org/Mentoring.