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# Co-Design, Implementation and Evaluation of an Audio Podcast about Parkinson's Disease

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**Parkinson's disease (PD) is one of the most prevalent neurologic disorders, leading to progressive disability that can be slowed but not stopped by treatment (Cotterell, 2018.) It is characterized by tremors, slow movements, stiffness in arms and legs, and balance impairment. The number of people diagnosed with PD in the UK is about 145,000, and more than 1 million people in the UK are affected as a friend, colleague or family member of someone living with the condition (Parkinson's UK, 2021). Like other chronic and progressive disabling diseases, PD patients experience stigma arising from symptoms that are impossible to hide, and they experience relational and communication problems (Maffoni et al. 2017). Recent evidence has highlighted that Parkinson's education for nursing students is often limited. Therefore, this partnership aimed to improve nursing students' knowledge and attitudes to PD through co-design and delivery of an audio podcast.**

Our partnership work used co-design methodology and our team consisted of more than twenty people that included people living with PD, people who cared for those with PD, volunteers who provided support to people with PD, PD nurse specialists, nursing students, charity representations from Parkinson's Disease UK and nurse lecturers from Queen's University Belfast (QUB). We co-designed a 75-minute audio podcast. The audio podcast was

comprised of three main segments that took the form of different nursing students hosting interviews with a person living with PD, a carer of someone with PD and a PD nurse specialist. These interviews were scripted (by the co-design team) to ensure that each speaker covered different learning outcomes.

The team were keen to evaluate the outcomes of this innovative form of education. Using mixed methods

we provided 332 student nurses with pre- and post-questionnaires about their knowledge related to Parkinson's Disease (Alwaleed et al. 2018; Bhidayasiri et al. 2014). Before listening to the audio podcast, students scored an average of 52.74% and after listening this rose to 80.07%. Using paired T-Tests, we determined statistical significance ( $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, we were also able to use sub-scale data to show specific improvements in student knowledge about diagnosis, treatments and the trajectory of illness after listening to the podcast.

Following on from these questionnaires, the team co-designed an interview guide which sought to explore how the audio podcast had influenced student practice in the six months after listening. Four focus groups comprised of a total of 35 nursing students took place. Using thematic analysis, three main themes emerged. The first theme was that the audio podcast helped students to empathise and better understand the lived experiences of people living with PD. In this theme, students noted their surprise around the fluctuation



Members of the Parkinson's Disease podcast co-design team

of PD symptoms (e.g. tremor could be worse at certain times of the day), their disappointment that people with PD experienced significant social stigma (e.g. members of the public perceiving people with PD to be intoxicated) and their perceived improved ability to support people with PD to live fulfilling lives in both a clinical setting and within their local community. The second theme that emerged was around the optimisation of nursing student practice and how knowledge about 'getting medication on time' helped students prioritise the pharmacological care of their patients with PD, how they were now aware of the role of PD nurse specialists (and how to contact or refer patients to these services) and how best to support carers of people with PD. The third theme that emerged was in relation to podcasting as a tool for education and students noted how they found this impactful and something that could be revisited in the future. Nursing students also expressed strong satisfaction with regards to the format and enjoyed hearing their colleagues leading interviews during the podcast.

In the past twelve months, the audio podcast has been listened to by more than 800 nursing students and it has now been embedded in both undergraduate and postgraduate nursing curricula at QUB. In addition, the audio podcasts were freely launched to the wider public during Parkinson's Awareness Week in April 2021. The online event attracted more than 350 delegates from across the UK representing higher education, nursing education, healthcare professionals and the public. The audio podcast is now freely available to other universities, the public and healthcare professionals via Parkinson's UK main website. Following feedback from the students, the podcast has also been made available as three distinct shorter interviews. This provides listeners with the opportunity to listen to the podcast in one go, or in



shorter bite-size parts: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/professionals/events-and-learning/podcast-learn-about-parkinsons>

This partnership work has demonstrated how student nurses, service users, family carers, volunteers, nurses and nurse lecturers have come together to create an innovative and sustainable resource for everyone interested in helping people with Parkinson's Disease to live well, both in their community and in practice.

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