

Unexpected happiness

Flourishing in the Face of Parkinson's

The question of well-being as it relates to Parkinson's Disease

BACKGROUND

To date most studies into Parkinson's disease (PD) have focused on the underlying causes, as well as management and treatment of the disease. However, as a chronic neurodegenerative condition, there is an equally important need to understand how people living with Parkinson's can continue living positive, healthy lives. A focus on salutogenesis including the factors that underly health and well-being may provide an answer. In this study, we examine whether people living with PD can live positively, and even 'flourish' in the face of Parkinson's.

RESULTS

We collected 131 responses consisting of 79 (60%) women and 53 (40%) men from 14 countries. Of these 96 (73%) had been diagnosed with Parkinson's. The average number of years since diagnosis was 6.4 years, with a range of <12 months to 47 years. Responses indicated that most people living with PD felt significantly high levels of psychological and social well-being, with an average of 74% of respondents indicating that they "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to each of the 8 positive statements in the FS. An average of 52% of respondents also indicated they experience feelings of mature happiness "Most of the Time" or "All of the Time" across each of the 7 items in the MHS-R.

METHOD

We generated an English-language survey based upon existing research into salutogenesis and well-being including existing theories on Flourishing and Mature Happiness. The survey utilised the Flourishing Scale (FS) designed to measure social-psychological well-being including items on engagement, optimism, and purpose. We also incorporated the Mature Happiness Scale-Revised (MHS-R) which includes items on acceptance, appreciation and harmony. The survey was deployed electronically via email and shared across several social media platforms. Participants included those diagnosed with the disease, but also others impacted by PD including carers, family members and health professionals.

CONCLUSION

Our results show that people with PD are living positively with this chronic condition. This suggests there are strategies to transition from languishing to flourishing following diagnosis, highlighting the importance of a salutogenic approach to PD. Further research is needed to identify these factors that promote health and well-being for people living with Parkinson's.

IT'S NOT FUNNY
itsnotfunny.org



University of
South Australia



MACQUARIE
University

Neil Arvin Breña^{1,2}, Edward Shepherd², Dominic Rowe^{2,3}

¹Allied Health & Human Performance Unit, University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

²It's Not Funny, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

³Faculty of Medicine & Human Health Science, Macquarie University, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia