

APRIL IS PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

*April Is Parkinson's Awareness Month and It's an
Ideal Time to Take Another Look at Your Estate Plan
to Ensure You've Made Accommodations Should
You or a Loved One Be Diagnosed*



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In our estate planning practice, we often hear our clients' concerns about dementia and Alzheimer's disease, but there's another disease that's just as troublesome – and is growing just as quickly – as dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Approximately 1 million Americans are living with a Parkinson's



disease diagnosis. More than 600,000 new diagnoses are occurring every year and as our society ages, these numbers are expected to grow as rapidly as Alzheimer's. It's a troublesome trend, but with proper planning, including applying for Medicaid

or Medicare in a responsible and timely fashion, you can slow down the progression.

April was Parkinson's Awareness Month and we thought this would be a great time to remind clients and raise awareness of this devastating disease. It's also an ideal time to take another look at your estate plan to ensure you've made accommodations should you or a loved one be diagnosed.

Parkinson's disease is a disorder of the brain and affects the way you move. It's been found in certain nerve cells within the brain that make dopamine. The nerve cells break down and prevent dopamine from doing its job, which is to control movement in a smooth and fluid fashion. It's a progressive disease and while it evolves slowly, the symptoms can be frightening.

IDENTIFYING PARKINSON'S DISEASE

There are four primary symptoms associated with Parkinson's. They include:

Slower movement

Stiff muscles

Tremors that present as shaking or trembling in the arms, hands and/or legs

Balance and walking problems

Most patients say they notice the tremors first; it's the most common "tell-tale" sign. It usually begins on one side, typically in one arm or leg, and then spreads to the other limbs. Eventually it encompasses the patient's entire body, creating problems with breathing, swallowing, coughing, writing, and more. The first symptoms usually appear when a person is in his late 50s or early 60s. Keep in mind, though, that this disease can strike anyone of any age at any time.



Medications ease the symptoms, though there are none currently on the market that provide any permanent relief. Patients and their families must consider the long term care that accompanies this disease. Even if you're able to manage it for years, at some point, it begins to progress.

PLANNING AHEAD--ESTATE PLANNING

While it's never comfortable or pleasant to consider your own mortality, taking the lead can help ensure your goals are met should you become incapacitated, as well as after your death. It can also help family members ease into their own transition.

The National Parkinson Foundation offers a number of Parkinson's specific Medicare benefits and criteria. This includes both Part A and Part B. You should apply for Medicare benefits as soon as possible. Remember that gaps in medical insurance coverage can occur, especially during the extended amount of time it can take to receive, review, and process a Medicare application. We also encourage our clients to not underestimate the possibility of having to file an appeal – it happens. Once you become eligible for Medicare, we can help you select the coverage options that will



best suit your healthcare and budgetary needs.

Depending on your needs and your specific financial situation, ensuring your estate plan is current helps to alleviate concerns regarding those who have advanced

Parkinson's disease. Our team of estate planning lawyers encourages clients to consider their will, along with a living will, any trusts they wish to establish, the ever-important medical power of attorney, and more recently,

the availability of a Medicaid trust, or as it's sometimes referred to, a "pay back trust".

When they're properly prepared and structured, Medicaid trusts can help protect your assets so that you can pass them on to family members without jeopardizing your nursing home or other medical coverage.

Also, we strongly encourage anyone who's preparing their will and end of life documents to discuss their decisions with their family members. In fact, many use their estate plan as the ideal avenue for bringing it up. Your advance directives ensure your wishes are honored and that any resources you've set aside are used according to your trust. You may also wish to discuss these with your family and loved ones.

While there's no cure for Parkinson's disease, researchers are moving toward that goal every day. With new funding, impressive breakthroughs and the dedication of the medical community, at some point, this debilitating disease will be eliminated entirely.

For more information on Parkinson's disease, be sure to visit The Parkinson's Disease Foundation at pdf.org; the National Parkinson Foundation at Parkinson.org and the American Society on Aging at asaging.org.

For more information on preparing your estate plan, your will and other important legal documents, we invite you contact DeBruyckere Law Offices. You'll be met with a team of caring and compassionate legal advocates who work each day to guide families to peace of mind through estate planning.

About the Author



Daniel A. DeBruyckere

Attorney DeBruyckere approaches each challenge not just with solid expertise, but also with a passion for helping others plan well for the future. As a husband with three children and two grandchildren, it's his own family experience that provides the motivation to ensure all of his clients are well protected. Besides his extensive background in the issues he specializes in, Dan's clients find that he genuinely cares about them, and that he pays attention to the details that matter to each person and their families.

EXPERIENCE

Attorney Daniel A. DeBruyckere has been practicing law in New Hampshire and Massachusetts since 1998, and has helped hundreds of clients with their estate planning and elder care issues. He is very well respected in the area of estate planning, probate, trust administration, elder law issues, and business planning.

Admitted in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, Attorney DeBruyckere is a former adjunct faculty member of the Massachusetts School of Law and is a member and past president of the Greater Salem Bar Association. He is also a member of the Essex County Bar Association, Massachusetts Bar Association, New Hampshire Bar Association, as well as a member of the National Association of Elder Law Attorneys.

EDUCATION

Attorney DeBruyckere is a graduate of Southern New Hampshire University, summa cum laude, and Massachusetts School of Law, cum laude. He served as editor of the Massachusetts School of Law's Law Review and was a regional finalist in the American Trial Lawyers' Association Trial Advocacy Competition.

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