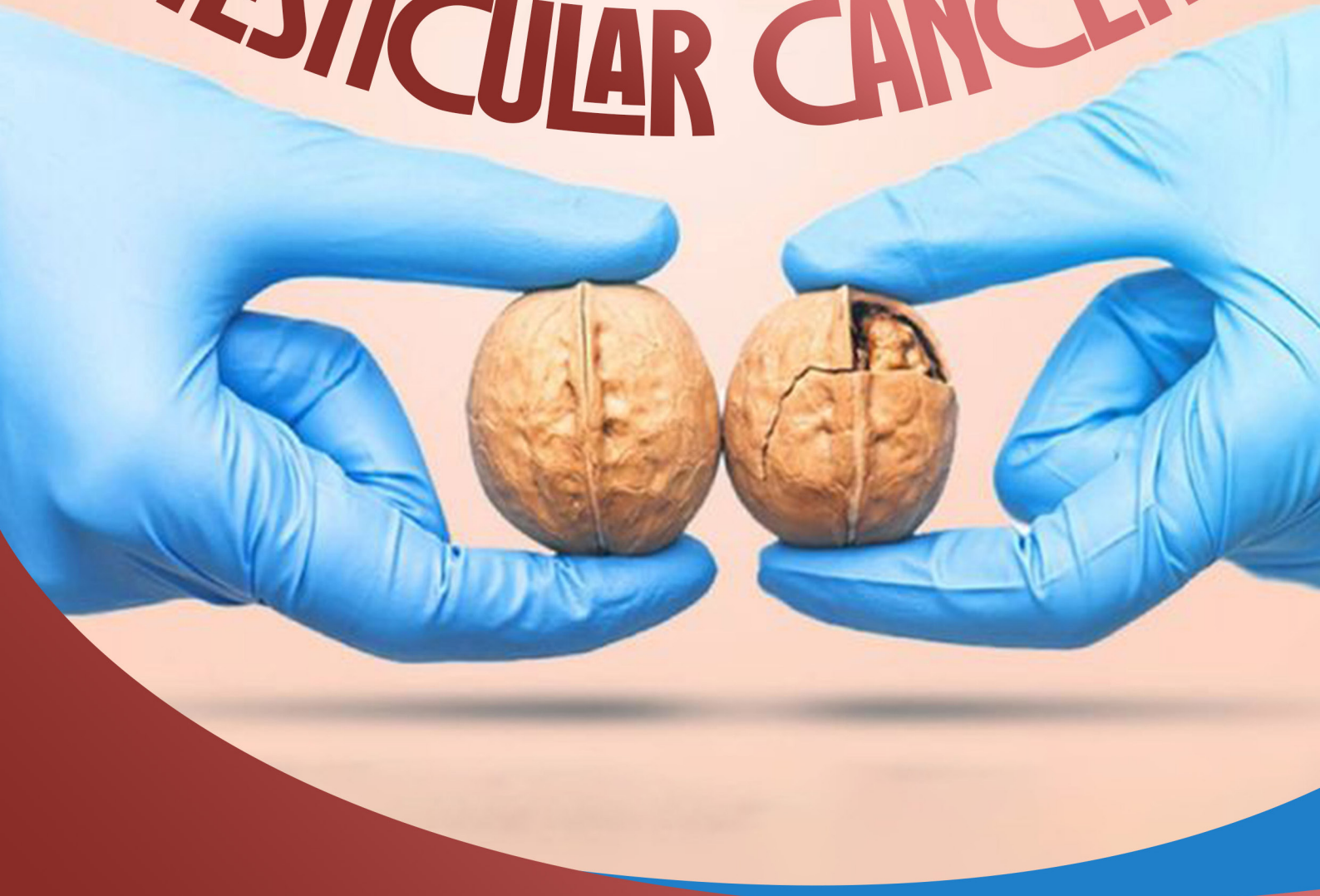


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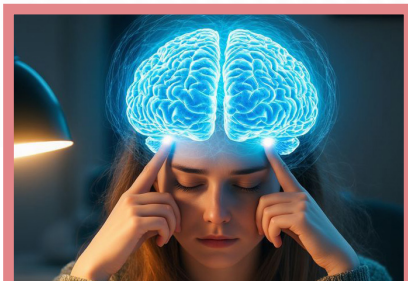
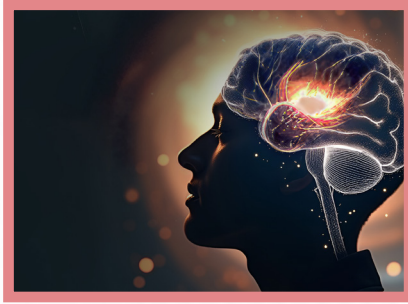
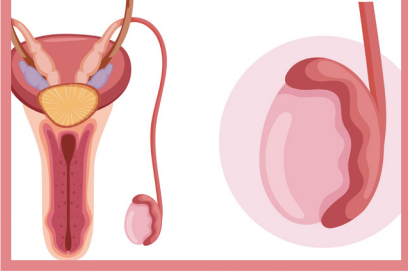
TESTICULAR CANCER



Special Report:
Health Community of West Africa Association
Observes Launch of Free Primary Healthcare
Policy in Ghana.
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Ask the Expert:
What If You're Pregnant...
and Don't Even Know It?
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HCOWAA: Advancing Healthcare Standards in West Africa

The Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWAA), based in Ghana, is a non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing healthcare across West Africa. Addressing the uneven distribution of medical resources, HCOWAA advocates for regional cooperation through a Health Alliance that unites healthcare stakeholders to create a cohesive health community.

With a mission to improve health outcomes in West Africa, HCOWAA facilitates collaboration, innovation, and research among professionals, leveraging collective resources to enhance healthcare services, policies, and access. HCOWAA envisions a resilient West African healthcare system where institutions and professionals lead groundbreaking research, foster innovation, and influence policies that elevate regional healthcare.

Through initiatives like establishing a regional healthcare database, launching research projects, and hosting policy roundtables, HCOWAA builds strong networks to drive healthcare advancements. Advocacy efforts focus on equitable access, supporting vulnerable populations, and addressing healthcare disparities. The organization's objectives include fostering research and innovation, supporting health policy reforms, and integrating medical equipment manufacturers with healthcare facilities.

HCOWAA also facilitates training programs, academic exchanges, and research grants, ensuring members are equipped with knowledge and skills to address regional health challenges effectively. Networking events like the HCOWAA Medical and Health Industry Investment Summit & Expo connect professionals, offering a platform for partnership and knowledge sharing.

HCOWAA's commitment extends to partnerships with international health organizations and academic institutions, which amplify its impact by introducing global best practices and strengthening West African healthcare infrastructure. Collaborative efforts with international partners promote training, research, and infrastructure upgrades for health facilities, pharmaceutical establishments, and clinics.

In addition, HCOWAA's magazine partnerships, including an MoU with Health Pulse Magazine, provide platforms to publish relevant content, share insights, and enhance visibility for ongoing initiatives. Through these combined efforts, HCOWAA aims to foster a collaborative healthcare environment that not only addresses urgent health challenges but also builds a sustainable, inclusive healthcare future for West Africa.

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Silent No More: Why Men Must Start Talking About Testicular Cancer

Every year, thousands of young men walk past a mirror, unaware that a simple habit could save their lives. Testicular cancer though highly treatable is still cloaked in silence, discomfort, and dangerous delay. For a disease that most commonly affects men between 15 and 35, this silence is not just cultural; it is costly.

The numbers tell a story we cannot afford to ignore. According to the American Cancer Society, nearly 10,000 new cases of testicular cancer are expected annually, with hundreds of deaths that could largely be prevented through early detection. A 99 percent survival rate for localized cases should be reassuring—but only if the disease is caught in time. And therein lies the problem: too many men wait.

Why? **Because talking about testicles still feels taboo.**

In many societies including here in Ghana and across West Africa men are conditioned to endure discomfort quietly. Health-seeking behavior often takes a back seat to pride, fear, or simple neglect. A painless lump? Easy to ignore. A dull ache? Probably nothing. Until it isn't.

Testicular cancer does not usually announce itself with dramatic pain. It whispers through subtle changes in size, weight, or texture. These early

signals are easy to miss if men are not paying attention to their own bodies. That is why self-examination is not just a recommendation; it is a responsibility.

And yet, even awareness campaigns struggle to break through. We readily discuss conditions like breast cancer, malaria, or hypertension but when it comes to men's reproductive health, the conversation fades into awkward silence. This must change.

Because the truth is simple: **early detection saves not just lives, but futures.**

Equally important is the role of healthcare professionals. Creating a safe, non-judgmental space for men to speak openly can make all the difference. When a young man walks into a clinic with a concern, he should be met with reassurance not intimidation.

Testicular Cancer Awareness Month should not be a once-a-year reminder. It should be the beginning of a broader cultural shift one where men are empowered to know their bodies, speak up without shame, and seek help without delay. Because in the end, the most dangerous thing about testicular cancer is not the disease itself it is the silence surrounding it.



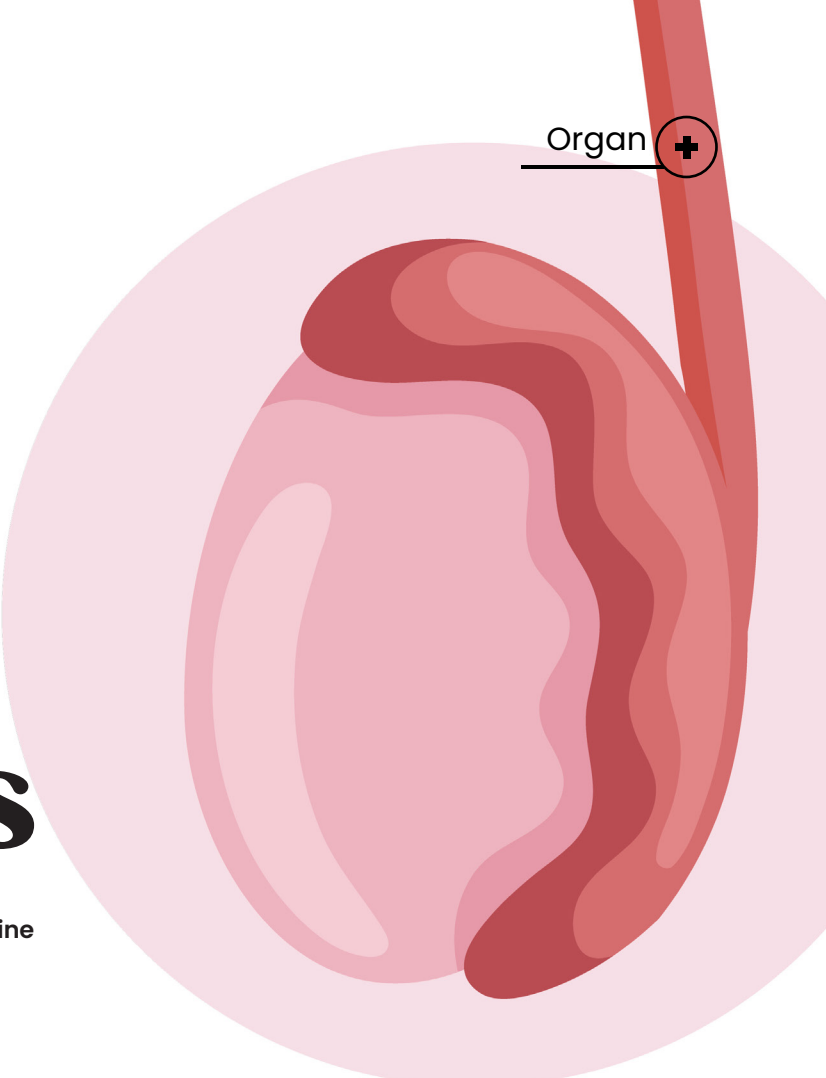
The Testicles

By Marilyn Tiphaine

The testicles, also known as testes, are a pair of small, oval-shaped organs located in the scrotum, just below the penis. Though often overlooked, they play a crucial role in male reproductive and overall health. Their primary functions are the production of sperm and the hormone testosterone, both essential for fertility, sexual development, and general well-being.

Testosterone, produced in the testicles, is responsible for the development of male characteristics such as a deeper voice, facial hair, muscle growth, and sex drive. It also contributes to bone strength and mood regulation. At the same time, the testicles continuously produce sperm, which is necessary for reproduction. Because of these functions, any problem affecting the testicles can have wide-ranging effects on a man's health.

Maintaining testicular health is important at every stage of life. Conditions such as Testicular Torsion, where the testicle twists and cuts off its own blood supply, require emergency care and can lead to permanent damage if not treated quickly. Infections like Epididymitis can cause pain and swelling, while hormonal imbalances may affect fertility and sexual function.



One of the simplest ways to protect this organ is through regular self-examination. Men are encouraged to check their testicles monthly, feeling for any lumps, swelling, or unusual changes in size or texture. This practice helps in early detection of abnormalities, including Testicular Cancer, which is highly treatable when caught early.

Lifestyle choices also play a role in testicular health. Wearing supportive underwear, avoiding excessive heat exposure (such as prolonged hot baths), practicing safe sex, and maintaining good hygiene can help prevent infections and other complications.

Despite their importance, discussions about testicular health are often avoided due to stigma or embarrassment. However, awareness and open conversations are key to prevention and early treatment. Understanding the role of the testicles and paying attention to any changes can help men take control of their health and seek medical care when needed.

Healthy testicles are essential not just for reproduction, but for overall physical and hormonal balance.

Health Community of West Africa Association Observes Launch of Free Primary Healthcare Policy in Ghana

The Health Community of West Africa Association has joined the Government of Ghana and the Ghana Health Service in the official launch of the Free Primary Healthcare Policy, a flagship initiative spearheaded by the President of the Republic, John Dramani Mahama.

The launch ceremony took place at the Shai-Osudoku District Hospital in the Greater Accra Region and brought together a distinguished gathering of stakeholders. Among them were the Minister of Health, the Director-General of the

Ghana Health Service, the Chief Executive of the National Health Insurance Authority, the Country Representative of the World Health Organization, and the President of the Health Community of West Africa Association, Sihong Jiang.

In his address, President Mahama explained that the Free Primary Healthcare Policy is designed to ensure that every citizen and legal resident can access essential healthcare services at no cost at the point of care.

“This initiative also provides an

opportunity to enroll individuals onto the National Health Insurance Scheme so they can benefit from a wider range of healthcare services,” he stated.

He further emphasized that the policy aims to remove financial barriers and promote equitable access to healthcare, especially for underserved communities. The government will begin implementation in 150 districts across the country, with a strong focus on rural and hard-to-reach areas.

As part of the rollout, the government will equip Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compounds, health centres, and public health units of polyclinics. Funding for the programme will be drawn from sources including the NHIS levy, SSNIT contributions, and government budgetary allocations.

President Mahama also highlighted a shift from curative to preventive healthcare under the policy. Key services to be provided include breast cancer screening, blood pressure checks, blood glucose testing, body mass index assessments, mental health screening, vision screening for infants, and comprehensive health checks for children and adolescents. Additional services include referrals for haemoglobin electrophoresis for newborns of sickling-positive mothers.





The Minister of Health, Kwabena Mintah Akandoh, noted that the initiative will expand primary healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. This includes the deployment of mobile health vans—locally known as “Onuador” vans—and the establishment of more health posts to reach remote populations.

He added that the government will introduce incentives such as allowances and training opportunities to attract and retain health workers in deprived areas, alongside broader sector improvement interventions and support for community pharmacies.

The Minister also encouraged citizens to play an active role by going for regular health screenings, keeping their NHIS membership active, following medical advice, and encouraging family members to seek preventive care.

Also present at the event, Greater Accra Regional Minister Linda Ocloo welcomed the initiative and pledged the full support of regional, municipal, and district authorities to ensure its effective implementation.

The ceremony concluded with the commissioning of a medical kiosk and the deployment of mini health

vans designed to provide community outreach and screening services.

The Health Community of West Africa’s participation in the launch underscores its commitment to supporting healthcare development across West Africa through strategic partnerships, innovation, and investment in public health initiatives.



Chronic Diseases and Women's Health

By Marilyn Tiphaine

Chronic diseases are long-term health conditions that often develop slowly and persist over time. For women, these conditions represent a significant and growing health challenge worldwide. Common chronic diseases affecting women include heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and certain autoimmune disorders. Despite their impact, many of these conditions are preventable or manageable with early detection and lifestyle changes.

One of the most concerning aspects of chronic diseases in women is that symptoms can sometimes be overlooked or misinterpreted. For instance, heart disease often perceived as a "male" condition is actually a leading cause of death among women. Symptoms such as fatigue, shortness of breath, or nausea may not immediately signal a heart problem, leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment.

Hormonal changes throughout a woman's life also play a role in chronic disease risk. Pregnancy, menopause, and conditions like polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) can influence metabolism, blood pressure, and insulin sensitivity. These changes may increase the likelihood of developing conditions such as type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease.

Lifestyle factors are equally important. Poor diet, physical inactivity, stress, and lack of sleep contribute significantly to the development and progression of chronic illnesses. In many communities, women may prioritize caregiving responsibilities over their own health, delaying routine check-ups or ignoring early warning signs.

Prevention and management are key. Regular health screenings, maintaining a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, engaging in physical activity, and managing stress can greatly reduce the risk. Education and awareness also empower women to make informed health decisions and seek timely medical care.

Addressing chronic diseases in women requires a holistic approach—one that considers biological, social, and environmental factors. By prioritizing women's health and promoting early intervention, we can reduce the burden of chronic diseases and improve quality of life for women across all stages of life.

New Hope for Parkinson's: Early Test and Treatments Emerge

By Marilyn Tiphaine

Parkinson continues to affect nearly 10 million people worldwide, making it the second most common neurodegenerative disorder after Alzheimer's disease. Although there is currently no cure, recent scientific breakthroughs are reshaping how the condition is detected and managed, offering new hope for earlier intervention and improved quality of life.

The disease develops when nerve cells in the brain's basal ganglia gradually break down, leading to a decline in dopamine production. Dopamine is a key chemical responsible for smooth and coordinated movement. As levels drop, patients often experience resting tremors, muscle rigidity, slowed movement, and balance problems. Importantly, non-motor symptoms such as loss of smell, constipation, depression, and sleep disturbances may appear many years before movement issues become obvious.

For decades, diagnosis depended largely on visible motor symptoms, meaning many cases were identified only after significant brain damage had already occurred. This is now changing. A newly approved synuclein skin biopsy test can detect abnormal alpha-synuclein protein in skin nerve fibers, a key biological marker linked to Parkinson's. This minimally invasive test allows clinicians to identify the disease much earlier—potentially years before severe motor symptoms develop—creating opportunities for earlier treatment and better long-term outcomes.

Treatment approaches are also advancing. While levodopa remains the gold-standard medication for symptom control, newer therapies such as continuous drug infusion systems and focused ultrasound techniques are improving management of tremors and motor fluctuations. Deep brain stimulation continues to provide relief for patients with advanced or treatment-resistant symptoms.

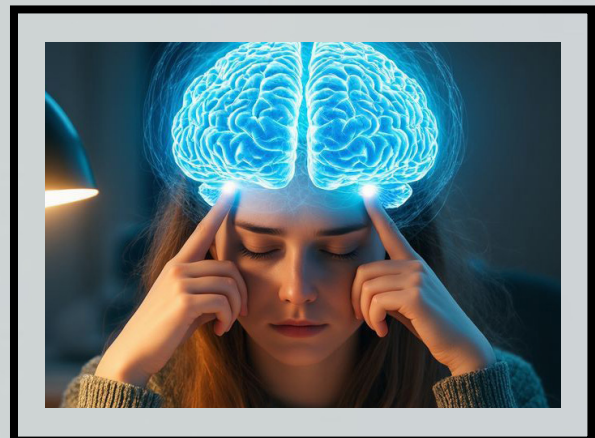
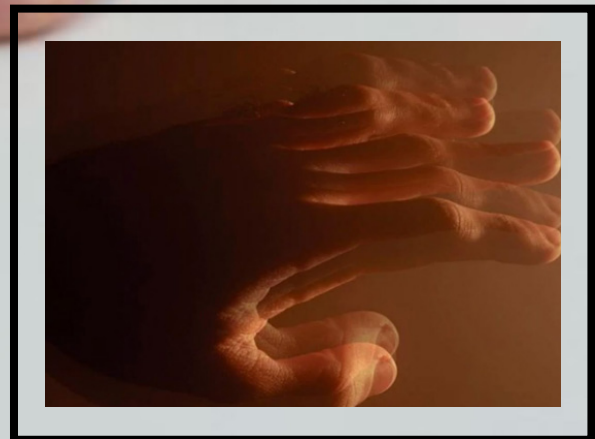
Beyond medication, research increasingly highlights the role of lifestyle interventions. High-intensity aerobic exercise, such as cycling at 80–85% of maximum heart rate, may help slow disease progression by supporting dopamine-producing neurons. In addition, targeted physiotherapy that emphasizes large, exaggerated movements can

improve balance, flexibility, and overall mobility, reducing the risk of falls.

Scientists are also investigating gene therapies and immunotherapies that target alpha-synuclein accumulation. Early clinical findings suggest these approaches could modify disease progression rather than just manage symptoms.

While a definitive cure remains out of reach, the combination of earlier diagnosis, innovative therapies, and proactive lifestyle strategies is transforming Parkinson's into a more manageable and potentially slower-progressing condition.

Source: Parkinson's Foundation; National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)



How Tech Is Bridging the Gap for Chronic and Rare Diseases

By Alberta Okyere

Technology is transforming how chronic and rare diseases are managed, offering new hope to millions worldwide. For people living with long-term conditions such as Diabetes and Heart Failure, as well as the estimated 300 million individuals affected by rare disorders, access to consistent and specialized care has long been a challenge. Today, digital innovation is helping bridge that gap.

One of the most impactful advancements is Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM). Wearable devices, including smartwatches and continuous glucose monitors, allow healthcare providers to track patients' vital signs in real time. These tools can detect early warning signs—such as irregular heart rhythms or rising blood pressure—before they escalate into serious complications. This proactive approach not only



improves patient outcomes but also reduces hospital admissions and healthcare costs.

For rare diseases, technology is proving equally transformative. Because these conditions affect smaller populations, diagnosis and treatment have traditionally been slow and complex. The use of Artificial Intelligence is changing that. AI systems can analyze vast amounts of genetic data and medical literature, helping clinicians identify rare conditions more quickly and accurately. This significantly shortens the diagnostic journey for many patients.

Digital platforms are also fostering global patient communities. Through apps like PatientLikeMe, individuals can share experiences, treatment outcomes, and support. This connectivity enables someone in one part of the world to learn from others facing the same rare condition elsewhere, reducing isolation and improving knowledge.

Additionally, Telehealth has expanded access to specialized care. Patients no longer need to travel long distances to consult experts. Virtual consultations make it easier to receive timely advice, especially for those in remote or underserved areas.

Despite these advances, challenges persist. Concerns about data privacy and security remain significant. Moreover, the digital divide means that not all patients have equal access to these technologies. There is also the risk that AI systems, often trained on more common conditions, may not always perform accurately for rare diseases.

Still, the future is promising. By combining smart devices, AI, and virtual care, healthcare is moving toward a more personalized approach. This shift offers meaningful support and improved quality of life for those living with chronic and rare conditions.

Experts Warn Ignorance Is Fueling Nigeria's Parkinson's Crisis

As Nigeria joined the global community to mark World Parkinson's Day on April 11, health advocates have raised alarm over the deep misconceptions and low awareness surrounding the neurological condition, warning that many citizens are living with the disease without knowing it.

Contrary to popular belief, Parkinson's disease is not limited to the elderly or non-Africans. According to Madam Ruth Ebe, Charity Manager of Parkinson Africa, even teenagers can develop the condition, which is caused primarily by reduced dopamine levels in the brain.

"Many people wrongly believe the disease only affects elderly people or non-Africans, Africans and even teenagers can develop it." Madam Ebe said during an awareness programme in Lagos. She emphasized that Parkinson's is neither caused by witchcraft nor a curse, and cannot be transmitted from person to person. Yet,

widespread ignorance has led to delayed diagnoses, as early symptoms such as tremors, slow movement, and loss of smell are frequently ignored or attributed to other causes.

While there is currently no cure for the disease, experts say early detection, regular exercise, and lifestyle adjustments can significantly slow progression and improve quality of life. Environmental factors, including pesticide exposure through food and contact with industrial chemicals, may also increase the risk of developing the condition.

Success Nwanedo, Communications and Community Engagement Officer, described Parkinson's as "more than a health condition—it is a life-altering reality that affects movement, independence and everyday living." She urged anyone experiencing stiffness, tremors, or persistent fatigue to seek professional medical

evaluation rather than self-diagnosing or assuming the worst. Caregiver Obinna Chima called on the government to step up awareness campaigns and healthcare support for people living with the condition. Caring for Parkinson's patients, he noted, requires strong commitment and careful planning, as individuals often need continuous assistance with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, and eating.

As the disease remains under-recognized across many Nigerian communities, advocates stress that awareness and early diagnosis are the most powerful tools available—until a cure is found. The message, they say, is simple: know the signs, seek help early, and support those affected.

Source: The Guardian



Is Parkinson's Disease Always Genetic?

By Priscilla Akorfa Fomevor

Parkinson's disease is often misunderstood, and one of the most common myths is that it is always inherited. While genetics can play a role, the reality is far more complex. Understanding the true causes of Parkinson's disease can help reduce stigma, encourage early detection, and promote better health choices.

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition that affects movement, leading to symptoms such as tremors, stiffness and slowed coordination. Because some families have multiple members diagnosed with the condition, many people assume it is purely genetic. However, research shows that this is not entirely accurate.

In fact, only about 15% of people living with Parkinson's disease report having a family history of the condition. This means that the majority of cases are nonhereditary, occurring in individuals with no known genetic link. While certain gene mutations have been identified—particularly in younger patients—these account for a relatively small proportion of overall cases.

So, if Parkinson's disease is not always genetic, what else contributes to its development?

Environmental factors are believed to play a significant role. Long-term exposure to toxins such as pesticides and herbicides has been linked

to an increased risk of developing Parkinson's disease. This is especially relevant in agricultural settings or areas with limited regulation of chemical use. Additionally, a history of traumatic brain injury (TBI) has also been associated with a higher likelihood of developing the condition later in life.

It is important to understand that Parkinson's disease typically results from a combination of factors rather than a single cause. Age remains the greatest risk factor, with most cases occurring in people over 60. Genetics, environment, and lifestyle may all interact in ways that researchers are still working to fully understand.

Dispelling the myth that Parkinson's disease is always genetic is crucial. It helps individuals recognize that anyone can be at risk, regardless of family history, and highlights the importance of minimizing environmental exposures and protecting brain health.

The bottom line, while genetics can influence Parkinson's disease, it is not the sole cause. Greater awareness of the multiple risk factors involved can empower individuals and communities to take proactive steps toward prevention and early intervention.

Memory, Mind, Movement: Cognitive Impairment, Dementia & Parkinson's Disease

By Priscilla Akorfa Fomevor

Memory problems are often associated with aging, but when cognitive decline becomes persistent or begins to interfere with daily functioning, it may signal an underlying neurological condition. Among these, dementia and Parkinson's disease are closely linked in ways that are often overlooked, especially as both can involve progressive changes in cognition and mental health.

Cognitive impairment refers to difficulties with memory, attention, language, and reasoning. It may present subtly at first—such as forgetting recent conversations, misplacing items, or struggling with concentration. While mild cognitive impairment does not always progress, it can be an early warning sign of more serious conditions, including dementia and Parkinson's-related cognitive decline.

Dementia is a general term describing a significant decline in cognitive abilities severe enough to affect independence. It is not a single disease but a syndrome caused by various conditions. As dementia advances, individuals may experience severe memory loss, confusion, personality changes, and difficulty performing basic daily tasks. Importantly, cognitive decline is also a recognized complication of Parkinson's disease. While Parkinson's is primarily known as a movement disorder—causing tremors, muscle stiffness, and slowed movement—it can also affect the brain's cognitive and emotional functions. In many individuals, especially in advanced stages, memory problems, slowed thinking, and difficulties with attention and

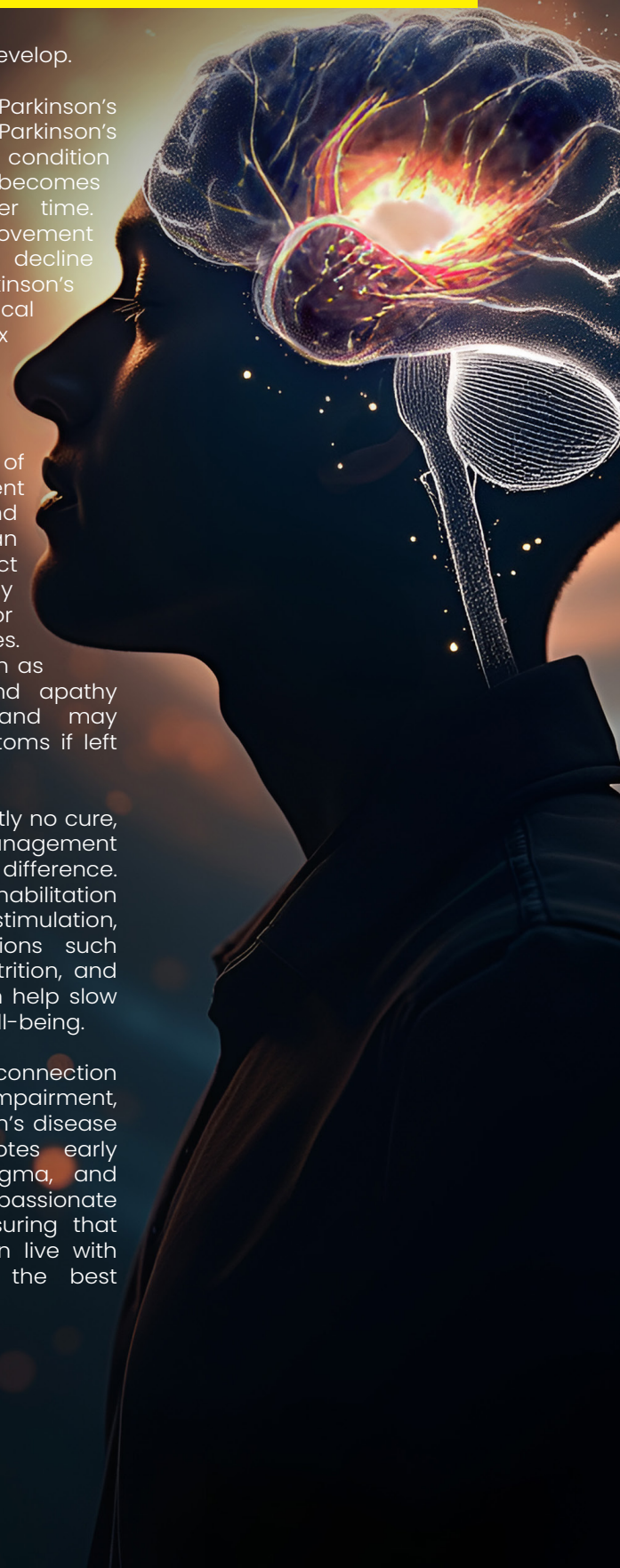
decision-making may develop.

Some people living with Parkinson's may progress to Parkinson's disease dementia, a condition where cognitive decline becomes more pronounced over time. This overlap between movement symptoms and mental decline highlights how Parkinson's is not solely a physical condition but a complex brain disorder affecting multiple domains of health.

The progression of cognitive impairment in both dementia and Parkinson's disease can significantly impact quality of life, not only for patients but also for caregivers and families. Emotional changes such as depression, anxiety, and apathy are also common and may worsen cognitive symptoms if left unaddressed.

Although there is currently no cure, early recognition and management can make a meaningful difference. Treatments, rehabilitation therapies, cognitive stimulation, and lifestyle interventions such as exercise, healthy nutrition, and social engagement can help slow decline and improve well-being.

Understanding the connection between cognitive impairment, dementia, and Parkinson's disease is essential. It promotes early diagnosis, reduces stigma, and encourages a more compassionate approach to care—ensuring that individuals affected can live with dignity, support, and the best possible quality of life.



The Overlooked Warning Signs

By Marilyn Tiphaine

Parkinson's disease (PD) is widely recognized for its hallmark motor symptoms tremor, stiffness, and slowed movement. However, growing evidence shows that PD extends far beyond movement disorders. Nearly all patients experience non-motor symptoms, and among the most overlooked are skin-related conditions that can significantly affect comfort, appearance, and quality of life.

PD is a neurodegenerative disorder caused by the loss of dopamine-producing neurons. While this primarily affects the brain, research shows that the disease also has widespread effects throughout the body including the skin. Factors such as inflammation, immune dysfunction, and genetic pathways appear to link neurological changes with dermatological conditions.

People with Parkinson's disease often experience skin conditions due to underlying inflammation and immune changes. Common issues include seborrheic dermatitis, which causes oily, flaky skin; rosacea, leading to facial redness; bullous pemphigoid, a more serious condition with itchy blisters; and melanoma, a type of skin cancer that appears more frequently in these patients. Recognizing and treating these conditions early is important, as they can affect both health and quality of life.

Skin conditions in Parkinson's disease are

often overlooked, yet they can indicate underlying disease processes while causing discomfort, pain, and emotional distress, ultimately affecting a patient's overall quality of life.

In some cases, skin symptoms may even appear before classic motor signs, offering an early clue for diagnosis.

Effective care for skin conditions in Parkinson's disease requires a multidisciplinary approach that includes regular dermatological check-ups for early detection, proper skin hygiene and skincare, sun protection to lower melanoma risk, timely medical treatment, and patient education to recognize warning signs.

Skin health is an essential but often neglected aspect of Parkinson's disease. By recognizing and managing dermatological symptoms early, healthcare providers can greatly enhance patient comfort, confidence, and quality of life. In PD, the skin is not just an outer layer it may be a window into deeper neurological changes.

Skin conditions in Parkinson's disease can be better managed through early screening, coordinated care between specialists, proper skincare

practices, and patient education to ensure timely treatment and improved quality of life.

Skin conditions in Parkinson's disease can be better managed through early screening, coordinated care between specialists, proper skincare practices, and patient education to ensure timely treatment and improved quality of life.





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HCOWA Highlights Power of Language in Advancing Healthcare Collaboration at International Chinese Language Day

The Health Community of West Africa Association (HCOWA) has underscored the critical role of language and cultural exchange in strengthening global healthcare systems during the 17th International Chinese Language Day celebration held in Elmina, Ghana.

Delivering a keynote address at the event, HCOWA President, Jiang Sihong, emphasized that effective communication remains a cornerstone of quality healthcare delivery, particularly in an increasingly interconnected world.

Speaking under the theme “Chinese Language: Lighting Up Colorful Dreams,” he highlighted how language is not merely a tool for conversation, but a life-saving bridge in medical practice. He illustrated this with a compelling scenario of a Ghanaian nurse working in China, where the ability to communicate in Mandarin could directly impact patient outcomes.

“Healthcare goes beyond medicine—it depends on communication, collaboration, and understanding,” he noted, stressing that investments in infrastructure and technology must be complemented by strong human connections and shared understanding.

The address also spotlighted the growing partnership between China and Africa in the health sector. Over the years, collaborations have led to the deployment of Chinese medical teams across Africa, the development of health facilities, and the training of thousands of African professionals. These efforts, he said, have significantly strengthened health systems and improved healthcare outcomes across the region.

At the heart of these achievements lies a powerful yet often overlooked factor—language.



According to the HCOWA President, language fosters understanding, builds trust, and enables effective collaboration among healthcare professionals from diverse backgrounds. From joint medical procedures to research collaboration and technical training, shared language continues to unlock new opportunities for innovation and impact.

He further described learning Chinese as a strategic advantage for African professionals, opening doors to global education, research, and professional exchange opportunities, particularly within leading Chinese medical institutions.

Addressing students at the event, he encouraged young people to embrace language learning as a pathway to global relevance and leadership. He noted that the ability to communicate across cultures positions the next generation to drive transformation not only in healthcare, but across multiple sectors.

The speech also reaffirmed HCOWA's broader mission to promote regional and international collaboration in advancing healthcare systems. Through strategic partnerships, knowledge

exchange, and innovation-driven initiatives, the Association continues to champion a more inclusive and resilient health sector in West Africa. As the world navigates complex health challenges, HCOWA reiterated that sustainable progress will depend on unity, shared vision, and effective communication.

"A healthier world will not be built in isolation—it will be built through unity, cooperation, and understanding—and that understanding begins with language," he concluded



Awareness on Testicular Cancer and Early Detection

By Alberta Okyere

Men's health is a vital but often overlooked aspect of overall wellbeing, and one of the key conditions that highlights the importance of awareness and early action is testicular cancer. Although it is not among the most common cancers, it is the leading cancer in young men aged 15 to 44, making it a significant men's health concern. The encouraging news is that when detected early, testicular cancer is highly treatable, with survival rates above 95 percent, reinforcing the importance of regular self-checks and timely medical attention.

Testicular cancer begins in the testicles, which are responsible for producing sperm and testosterone—hormones essential for male reproductive and physical health. In many cases, the earliest sign is a painless lump, swelling, or change in size in one testicle. Some men may also experience a dull ache in the lower abdomen, groin discomfort, a feeling of heaviness in the scrotum, or fluid buildup. Because symptoms can be subtle at first, many cases are only detected when men become familiar with their own bodies through self-examination.

Treatment is highly effective and typically begins with surgical removal of the affected testicle, followed by chemotherapy or radiation if necessary, depending on the stage and type of cancer. Despite its seriousness, most men recover fully and continue to live healthy, active lives after treatment.

Ultimately, testicular cancer underscores a broader message in men's health: early detection saves lives. Regular self-checks, open conversations about reproductive health, and reducing stigma around seeking medical help are essential steps. When men take their health seriously and act early, outcomes improve dramatically, not just for testicular cancer but for overall wellbeing throughout life.





Parkinson's Disease in Ghana:

Recognizing the Signs Before It's Too Late

A man reaches for a cup of water and notices a slight tremor in his hand. It is small, almost unnoticeable, and easy to ignore. Days pass, and movements that once felt effortless begin to require more intention. His steps slow, his posture stiffens, and his voice grows quieter. To those around him, it may seem like a natural part of aging, something to be endured rather than questioned. Yet these subtle, progressive changes may be the early signs of Parkinson's disease a condition that often begins quietly but carries serious implications over time.

Understanding Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition that primarily affects

movement. "Progressive" means the condition worsens over time, with symptoms gradually becoming more noticeable and more limiting. It occurs when nerve cells in the brain, particularly those responsible for producing dopamine, begin to deteriorate. Dopamine is essential for smooth, coordinated muscle movement. As its levels decline, individuals may struggle with movement, balance, and coordination.

Although Parkinson's is more common in older adults, it is not a normal part of aging. It is a medical condition that requires attention, early recognition, and proper management. Understanding this distinction is important, especially in communities where symptoms may be dismissed as simply "getting older."

Early Signs We Often Miss

One of the greatest challenges with Parkinson's disease is how quietly it begins. Early symptoms are often subtle and easily

overlooked. A person may move more slowly than usual or take longer to complete simple tasks. Their body may feel stiff, especially when standing up or turning while walking. Facial expressions may reduce, making the person appear withdrawn or less engaged. Speech can become softer, and handwriting may shrink or become cramped.

Changes in walking patterns are also common. One arm may not swing naturally, or steps may become shorter and less fluid. On their own, these signs may seem minor and are often attributed to stress, fatigue, or aging. However, when they occur together, they can signal the early stages of Parkinson's disease. Unfortunately, many people in Ghana seek medical help only when symptoms have significantly progressed.



Ethel Selasi Dei

Occupational Therapist

What Can Be Done:**Management and Awareness**

While there is currently no cure for Parkinson's disease, effective management can help individuals maintain independence and quality of life. Early consultation with a qualified healthcare professional, particularly a neurologist, is essential. Regular monitoring allows for timely adjustments in treatment and better control of symptoms.

Rehabilitation also plays a critical role. Physiotherapy can improve strength, balance, and flexibility, while occupational therapy helps individuals adapt daily activities to remain

independent. Speech therapy supports communication as voice changes occur. These interventions are not just clinical treatments they help preserve dignity and confidence.

Lifestyle choices matter as well. Staying physically active, eating a balanced diet, getting adequate rest, and maintaining social connections all contribute to overall wellbeing. Support groups can provide emotional encouragement and practical advice for both patients and caregivers.

In Ghana, awareness remains a key gap. Early symptoms are often misunderstood or

ignored, delaying diagnosis and care. By encouraging open conversations within families and communities, more people can learn to recognize the warning signs. Public education campaigns, especially around World Parkinson's Day, can further promote early detection and reduce stigma.

Recognizing Parkinson's disease early creates an opportunity for timely care and better outcomes. By combining medical support, rehabilitation, healthy living, and increased awareness, Ghanaian communities can move from late recognition to early action ensuring that fewer lives are quietly affected without help.



The Truth About Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is often misunderstood and sometimes confused with other conditions that share similar symptoms. Health experts explain that Parkinsonism is a broader term used to describe disorders that resemble Parkinson's disease but have identifiable causes. These include conditions such as multiple system atrophy and vascular Parkinsonism, the latter often resulting from strokes that affect areas of the brain like the basal ganglia.

Parkinson's disease itself, however, is distinct. It is a progressive neurological

disorder whose exact cause remains unknown, although both genetic and environmental factors are believed to contribute.

Before making a diagnosis, doctors consider several risk factors. Some are non-modifiable, including age, sex, and genetics. Individuals with a family history of Parkinson's disease may face a higher risk, and men are more commonly affected than women. Aging is also a significant factor, as natural changes in the brain occur over time.

There are also modifiable risk factors, particularly environmental exposures. Contact with harmful chemicals and pollutants—such as paraquat, a herbicide—has been

linked to an increased risk of developing the disease. Repeated head injuries may also play a role. Reducing exposure to these factors can help lower overall risk.

Diagnosis of Parkinson's disease is largely clinical. Doctors look for key symptoms such as slow movement (bradykinesia), resting tremors, and muscle rigidity. Early signs may also include small handwriting and reduced facial expression, often described as a "masked face." In some cases, medications like levodopa are used to support diagnosis; noticeable improvement in symptoms after treatment can help confirm the condition.



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A notable example is REM sleep behavior disorder, where individuals physically act out their dreams. Instead of remaining still during sleep, they may kick, move, or even shout, sometimes posing a risk to themselves or others.

Beyond the medical aspects, stigma remains a serious issue. In some communities, people living with tremors are misunderstood and may be wrongly labeled as cursed or associated with superstition. This often leads to social withdrawal,

with individuals avoiding public gatherings, including religious and community events.

Managing Parkinson's disease requires a comprehensive approach. Medications such as levodopa help replenish dopamine levels, while other drugs enhance its effectiveness. Rehabilitation therapies, including physiotherapy and regular exercise, are essential for maintaining mobility and independence. Speech therapy is equally important, helping patients

cope with difficulties in speaking and swallowing as the disease progresses.

Although there is currently no cure, increased awareness, early detection, and proper care can significantly improve quality of life. With the right support, individuals living with Parkinson's disease can continue to lead meaningful, active, and dignified lives.



Health Power Bowl

(Anti-Inflammatory Support Meal)

Ingredients

1 cup quinoa or brown rice (fiber + energy)

1 cup spinach or kale (rich in antioxidants)

½ cup broccoli (supports detox processes)

½ avocado (healthy fats for hormone support)

1 boiled egg or grilled chicken/fish (protein + zinc)

1 tablespoon nuts or seeds (pumpkin or walnuts are great)

1 tablespoon olive oil

Juice of **½ lemon**

Optional: garlic, turmeric, or black pepper

How to prepare

Cook quinoa or rice and let it cool slightly

Lightly steam broccoli (don't overcook

to keep nutrients)

In a bowl, add greens, grains, and broccoli

Add sliced avocado and protein

Sprinkle seeds or nuts

Drizzle olive oil and lemon juice

Add a pinch of turmeric and black pepper for extra anti-inflammatory benefit

Why this helps

This meal is designed to support overall health

Antioxidants (greens, broccoli) help protect cells

Healthy fats (avocado, olive oil) support hormone balance

Zinc and protein (eggs, seeds) support male reproductive health

Fiber helps regulate metabolism and detox pathways



What If You're Pregnant... and Don't Even Know It?

By Cleopatra Abbey

Midwife, Korle Bu teaching Hospital

It may sound unlikely even impossible but some women go through pregnancy without realizing it until the very late stages, or in rare cases, until labor begins. This condition, known as cryptic pregnancy, challenges what many believe about how the body signals pregnancy.

In a typical pregnancy, signs such as missed periods, nausea, weight gain, and a growing baby bump serve as clear indicators. However, in a cryptic pregnancy, these signs may be absent, extremely mild, or easily mistaken for other health issues. As a result, a woman may continue her daily life completely unaware that she is expecting.

One of the key reasons this happens is hormonal imbalance. In such cases, pregnancy hormones may not rise in the usual pattern, preventing the body from displaying obvious symptoms. Women with conditions like Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), who already experience irregular menstrual cycles, may not recognize a missed period as unusual. Some may even experience light or irregular bleeding that appears similar to menstruation, reinforcing the belief that pregnancy is not possible.

Physical factors can also play a role. A growing pregnancy may be less noticeable in women with higher body weight or strong abdominal muscles, especially in the early months.

Beyond physical explanations, psychological factors such as stress, denial, or simply not expecting pregnancy particularly when using contraceptives can lead to symptoms being overlooked or misinterpreted.

While cryptic pregnancy can occur at any age, certain groups may be more likely to experience it. Teenagers may lack the awareness to recognize early signs, while young adults may attribute symptoms to stress or lifestyle changes. Women in their 30s may dismiss changes as fatigue or hormonal fluctuations, and those over 40 may confuse symptoms with perimenopause. In general, it is more common among women with irregular cycles, underlying hormonal conditions, or limited awareness of pregnancy indicators.

The symptoms themselves are often subtle. Persistent fatigue, slight or no weight gain, mild abdominal changes, breast tenderness, occasional nausea, dizziness, mood swings, and frequent urination may all occur but not in a way that clearly signals pregnancy. Even fetal movements can be mistaken for gas or digestive discomfort.

Despite its subtlety, cryptic pregnancy carries real risks. Without awareness, a woman is unlikely to seek prenatal care, missing critical health checks that monitor the wellbeing of both mother and baby. This

can increase the likelihood of complications and may lead to unexpected labor without medical support an outcome that can be both dangerous and traumatic.

Although cryptic pregnancy cannot always be prevented, awareness is a powerful tool. Paying attention to unusual or persistent changes in the body, taking a pregnancy test when in doubt, and maintaining regular health check-ups can help ensure that no signs are overlooked.

Pregnancy does not always present itself in expected ways. Sometimes, the body whispers instead of shouting. And in those moments, listening closely can make all the difference for both mother and child.



Living with Parkinson's disease:

A Family's Journey of Care and Support

Every year, World Parkinson's Day reminds us not only of the need to understand Parkinson's disease, but also of the importance of supporting families who care for loved ones living with this condition. Parkinson's disease is a progressive brain disorder that affects movement, daily activities, and overall quality of life—impacting not just individuals, but entire households.

Parkinson's disease occurs when nerve cells in the brain that produce dopamine gradually become damaged or die. Dopamine helps control smooth and coordinated movement, and as its levels reduce, movement becomes slower and less controlled. According to the World Health

Organization, symptoms develop gradually and worsen over time. Common signs include hand tremors, muscle stiffness, slow movement, poor balance, and difficulty with coordination. Early symptoms may seem minor—a slight shaking in one hand, difficulty buttoning clothes, smaller handwriting, or reduced arm swing while walking. Speech may become softer, and facial expression may reduce, sometimes making the person appear withdrawn.

As the condition progresses, everyday tasks such as dressing, bathing, eating, writing, cooking, and getting out of a chair become more challenging. These changes often affect confidence and independence, and many individuals begin to rely more on family members for support. In many homes, relatives naturally step into caregiving roles, assisting with daily routines, providing supervision, and offering emotional reassurance. This shift can be physically and emotionally demanding, making family understanding, patience, and shared responsibility essential.

Parkinson's disease also affects emotional well-being. Individuals may experience anxiety, depression, sleep problems, or reduced motivation. These changes can influence family dynamics, requiring open communication, empathy, and consistent emotional support. A supportive home environment not only improves the patient's quality of life but also helps families cope more effectively.

Although there is currently no cure, treatment can greatly improve daily functioning. Medicines such as levodopa help replace dopamine and improve movement. However, medication alone is not enough, as many day-to-day challenges remain. This is where occupational therapy becomes especially valuable—not just for the patient, but for the entire family.



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Occupational Therapist

Occupational therapists play a central role in helping individuals with Parkinson’s disease maintain independence while guiding families on how to provide effective support. They focus on making everyday activities easier, safer, and more manageable within the home environment. For example, a person who struggles with dressing due to stiffness and slow finger movement may be taught to sit while dressing, wear loose-fitting clothes, or use adaptive fasteners instead of small buttons. Family members are often guided on how to assist without taking over completely, preserving the individual’s dignity and confidence.

For tasks like writing, occupational therapists may recommend larger pens, lined paper, and hand exercises to improve control. In the kitchen, they may suggest simple tools or techniques that make cooking safer and less tiring. These practical strategies not only support the individual but also reduce the physical strain on caregivers.

Safety at home is another key focus. Because Parkinson’s disease affects balance, the risk of falls increases. Occupational therapists work with families to make simple but effective home modifications such as removing loose rugs, improving lighting, rearranging furniture for easier

movement and installing grab bars in bathrooms. These adjustments, often implemented together as a family, create a safer and more supportive living space.

Energy conservation is equally important. Fatigue is a common symptom, and occupational therapists teach both patients and caregivers how to structure the day. This includes breaking tasks into smaller steps, resting between activities, and planning demanding tasks during periods of higher energy. Families play a crucial role in reinforcing these routines and ensuring they are consistently followed.

Beyond physical care, occupational therapy also supports emotional well-being by helping people stay engaged in meaningful activities such as cooking, reading, gardening, worship, or social participation.

As the world marks World Parkinson’s Day, the message remains clear: Parkinson’s disease changes life, but with early treatment, rehabilitation, family support, and occupational therapy, many people can continue to live active and meaningful lives.



Testicular Cancer and the Cost of Delay

By Alberta Okyere

Testicular Cancer is a relatively uncommon form of cancer, but it is important because it mainly affects young men, typically between the ages of 15 and 44. The encouraging news is that it is one of the most treatable cancers, especially when detected early, with survival rates exceeding 95 percent.

The most common symptom is a painless lump or swelling in one testicle. Some men may also notice a dull ache in the groin or lower abdomen, a feeling of heaviness in the scrotum, or a sudden buildup of fluid. In less common cases, symptoms such as breast tenderness or back pain may appear if the cancer has spread beyond the testicle. Doctors do not know the exact cause of testicular cancer, but several risk factors are known. These include having an undescended testicle at birth, a family history of the disease (such as a father or brother affected), a previous diagnosis in the other testicle, and being of Caucasian descent. Unlike many other cancers that affect older adults, testicular cancer is most common in younger men.

If a lump is found, it is important not to panic, as most testicular lumps are not cancerous. However, medical evaluation should be done quickly. Doctors usually begin with a physical examination followed by an ultrasound to assess the testicle. If abnormalities are detected, blood tests may be used to check for tumor markers. In most

confirmed cases, diagnosis involves surgically removing the affected testicle through a procedure called an inguinal orchiectomy. Needle biopsies are avoided because they may increase the risk of spreading cancer cells.

Treatment is highly effective and may include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or active surveillance depending on the stage and type of cancer. Even when the disease has spread, cure rates often remain around 80 percent or higher.

Doctors strongly recommend monthly self-examinations. This simple check takes about two minutes and is best done after a warm shower. Each testicle should be gently rolled between the fingers to feel for any hard lumps or unusual changes. Any abnormal finding should be evaluated by a healthcare professional promptly.

With early detection and modern treatment, most men go on to live normal, healthy lives, including maintaining fertility. In some cases, sperm banking is recommended before treatment begins.

Testicular Cancer

Health Terms under Testicular Cancer

Health conditions can often feel overwhelming due to complex medical language. This glossary breaks down essential terms to improve understanding and support informed health conversations.

Tremor: An involuntary shaking movement, usually starting in the hands or fingers. It is one of the most recognizable early signs of Parkinson's disease.

Bradykinesia: A medical term describing slowness of movement. It can make everyday tasks such as walking, dressing, or writing more difficult.

Rigidity: Muscle stiffness that reduces flexibility and can cause discomfort or

pain during movement.

Dopamine: A brain chemical responsible for smooth and coordinated movement. In Parkinson's disease, dopamine levels are significantly reduced.

Testicular Mass: A lump or swelling in the testicle, often one of the earliest warning signs that should not be ignored.

Orchiectomy: A surgical procedure involving the removal of one or both testicles as part of cancer treatment.

Tumor Markers: Substances found in the blood that may indicate the presence or progression of cancer in the body.

Metastasis: The process by which cancer spreads from its original

location to other parts of the body.

Chronic Condition: A long-term health condition that develops slowly and requires ongoing medical care and management.

Rare Disease: A disease that affects a small percentage of the population but often requires specialized diagnosis and treatment.

Remission: A period during which disease symptoms decrease significantly or temporarily disappear.

Symptom Management: A combination of medical care, therapy, and lifestyle changes aimed at controlling symptoms and improving quality of life.

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