Welcoming Remarks

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What’s Missing? Communication and the PD Partnership

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Why Study Family Communication in Parkinson Disease?

We know little about

- Communication in later-life families
- Impact of chronic illness on communication
Purpose

- Nonverbal Communication
- Nonverbal Communication & PD
- PD & couples’ communication
What is Nonverbal Communication?

- Facial Expressions
- Gestures
- Vocal Tone Changes
- Posturing
Why Study Nonverbal Communication?
Risk: Social Isolation

Unable to:

• Share feelings
• Understand & empathize
• Establish & maintain

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Risk: Poor Care

• Inadequate Care
• Inappropriate Care
• Fragmented Care
Nonverbal Communication
NV Communication & PD
PD Symptoms & Communication

- Limited, rigid, asynchronous gestures
- Reduced, frozen, or blended expressions
- Bent posture, reduced eye contact
Nonverbal Behaviors and PD

- PWPs can process emotional input
- Reduced nonverbal behaviors
- Unaware of reduced cues
- Partners’ impressions of mates’ skills
Missing the “Team WE”
Missing the “Social Us”
Missing the “Unique HIM / HER”
Nonverbal Study
Elder NV Communication Study

• To assess and describe elder partners’ ability to communicate nonverbally with each other

• To explore for factors influencing couples’ nonverbal communication
  • Gender
  • Age
  • Education
  • Relationship Length & Satisfaction
  • PD Duration & Severity
Sample (N = 83 couples)

- Male-female couples; 33 WE / 50 PD
- Relationship length: M=40.1 yrs.
- Age: M=69.6 years (range 50 - 90 yrs)
- Education level: M=16 years
- PD duration: M=10.3 years (3 - 31 yrs)
- PD meds: most on dopamine replacement
Method

• Setting - Couples’ homes

• Procedure
  • Filming Marital Communication Scale as modified for elder couples/chronic illness
  • Debriefing
  • Relationship satisfaction questionnaire (RSQ)
Marital Communication Scale

• Adapted the Marital Communication Scale (MCS) → MCS-M

• Reflected situations germane to PD

• Comprised of 9 Messages x 3 emotional tones → 27 messages
Example of MCS-M

- **Scenario:**
  You come into the room and see your partner going through your dresser drawer.

- **Message:**
  “What are you doing in my drawer?”

- **Emotional Intention:**
  
  **Positive:** You realize your partner is doing something to surprise you and you love surprises.

  **Neutral:** You are just curious to know what your partner is doing.

  **Negative:** You are angry as you have told your partner never to do this.
Sample Video Clips

4 subjects – 2 Well Elders (WE) 
– 2 PD Elders

• “What are You Doing in My Drawer?”
• 3 Intentions - positive, neutral, or negative
• Mark +, 0, -
Results
Accuracy Communicating Nonverbal Cues

PD Couples: MCS-M average was 14 out of 27*

*WE’s 18 out of 27
PD Couple Accuracy Related to Type of Emotion

- Possible: 9
- Positive: 2.9
- Neutral: 5.4
- Negative: 4.9
PD Couple Accuracy versus Matched Well Couples
Perceptions of PD Effect on Communication

67% felt PD had LITTLE to NO Effect
Factors Related To Higher Accuracy

- Female Gender of Sender
- Younger Age
- Shorter Relationships
- Similarity of RSQ scores – WE only

NB: *NO correlates* with PD severity or duration
What Might This Mean For You?

• PD limits ability to send cues
• PD has greater effect on Partner ability
• Most participants unaware of PD effect
• PD reduces positive communication
• PD may reduce couples’ closeness
What Can We Do?

• Develop better ways to communicate nonverbally – as a couple

• Make participation active - a 2-way street

• Develop better ways to communicate nonverbally – with healthcare providers
For PWP

• Hand to Heart

• Simple Pat on the Back

• Thumb’s Up........ or Down!

• Time Out signal
For Partners of PWP

• Sit next to each other

• Wait....for the Response

• Positive Signs ............ 5 to 1

• Laugh whenever possible!
For Healthcare Providers

• Take 2 minutes – ask PWPs:
  ▫ What made them happy recently?
  ▫ What made them upset/angry recently?

• If unable to tell emotions set up nv cues – thumbs up or down!

• Lack of expression ≠ unaware/non-caring
Conclusions

• The potential of PD to negatively impact or isolate people is real

• The ability to communicate nonverbally is critical

• We are ALL part of the answer
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• The families who taught me about communication challenges in aging and PD
Thank You!
Questions and Answers
Closing Remarks

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