

About Parkinson's Disease-Related Hallucinations and Delusions



What is Parkinson's disease?

Parkinson's disease is a progressive central nervous system disorder that affects about one million people in the United States.^{1,2} Signs and symptoms can vary with people experiencing both motor symptoms (such as slowness of movement, resting tremors, limb stiffness, and trouble with balance) and non-motor symptoms (such as constipation, impaired bladder control, anxiety and depression, loss of mental sharpness/acuity, hallucinations and delusions).²⁻⁶ When patients experience hallucinations and/or delusions related to Parkinson's disease, it is known as Parkinson's disease psychosis.⁴

What are hallucinations and delusions associated with Parkinson's disease psychosis?



Around **50 percent** of people living with Parkinson's may experience hallucinations or delusions during the course of their disease.⁷ Physicians may refer to these Parkinson's-related hallucinations and delusions as Parkinson's disease psychosis (PDP).⁴ Non-motor symptoms, including hallucinations and delusions, can be more troublesome than motor symptoms, in terms of quality of life.⁸ PDP may add to the burden of caring for a loved one with Parkinson's disease.^{9,10}



Hallucinations and delusions can worsen over time, and it gets harder for people who experience them to know whether or not what they are experiencing is real.^{4,11} However, approximately 90 percent of patients don't proactively tell their physicians about these symptoms.^{3,12}



A **hallucination** is defined as a perception-like experience that occurs without an external stimulus and is sensory (seen, heard, felt, tasted, smelled) in nature.⁴

A **delusion** is defined as a false, fixed belief despite evidence to the contrary.⁴

Hallucinations and delusions may be described as:⁴



SEEING THINGS THAT OTHERS DON'T

- Such as people, animals, or objects



HEARING THINGS THAT OTHERS DON'T

- Such as hearing sounds, music, or voices



PARANOIA

- Such as believing people are talking about you, or trying to access your money



FALSE BELIEFS

- Such as fears of loved ones stealing from you, putting you in harm's way, or being unfaithful

Understanding and Diagnosing PDP

There is no clear understanding of the exact cause of PDP, although certain brain chemicals and receptors (e.g., dopamine and serotonin) are believed to play a role. In general, the condition is believed to be caused by either a side effect of dopamine therapy, which is common to PD treatment, or a natural progression of PD.⁴ There is no predicting which patients with Parkinson's will develop PDP (hallucinations and delusions).⁴ Those experiencing symptoms of these described hallucinations and/or delusions should talk with their healthcare provider (HCP) about potential treatment options. It is important for people living with PDP to discuss the full range of Parkinson's disease symptoms with their movement disorder specialist and/or other HCP.¹³

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