

Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a chronic disorder of the central nervous system, which usually appears in patients after age 45. Parkinsonism is characterized by four main clinical features: tremor, rigidity, stiffness, and slowness of movement. Tremor at rest is typical of Parkinsonism and is abolished or reduced by voluntary movement. The affected limb frequently shows rigidity, experienced as a resistance to passive movement. A Parkinson's patient may experience difficulty in performing simple tasks, such as buttoning a shirt. As the manifestations of this disease gradually become more severe, the Parkinson's patient tends to assume a stooped posture and walks with a slow, shuffling gait, and, in time, will develop a generalized slowness of all body movements. This disease becomes progressively disabling with the passage of years. The cause of Parkinson's disease is unknown. Drug therapy improves the signs and symptoms but does not halt or reverse the disease. Unfortunately, drugs used to treat Parkinsonism have significant side effects, and after several years of treatment, the drugs' effectiveness declines. The long-term course of Parkinsonism is progressively downhill. Progressive dementia occurs in one-third to one-half of the patients and they are less tolerant to medication. There is an increased mortality with Parkinson's disease over the general population. If there is gait disturbance, the mortality is higher. Underwriting considerations are based on which stage of the disease is present with Stage I being early/mild disease. Age of onset of Parkinson's disease before age 50 will carry a higher mortality risk.

Stage I: unilateral involvement

Stage II: bilateral involvement but normal stance

Stage III: bilateral involvement with mild postural imbalance, but able to lead an independent life

Stage IV: bilateral involvement with postural instability, requires substantial help

Stage V: severe disease; restricted to bed or wheelchair

Mean survival with treatment is 9-15 years. Mortality occurs from injuries, aspiration, or infections.

Stage I, II or very slowly progressive Table B*

Stage III, or moderately progressive with no dementia Table C to D*

Stage IV, or rapidly progressive over several years usually decline

Stage V, or dementia present usually decline

*The rating will be higher if the age of onset is under 50 years old. For example: a 60 year old with mild, only slowly progressive disease and no gait abnormality would be rated Table B.

If your client has a history of Parkinson's Disease, please answer the following:

1. Please list date of diagnosis:

2. Please note the functional stage of the client currently:

Stage I unilateral involvement _____

Stage II bilateral involvement but normal stance _____

Stage III bilateral involvement with mild postural imbalance but able to lead an independent life

Stage IV bilateral involvement with postural instability, requires substantial help

Stage V severe disease; restricted to bed or wheelchair _____

3. Has there been any evidence of progression?

yes, please give details

4. Is your client on any medications?

yes, please give details

5. Please note if any of the following have occurred (check all that apply):

dementia recurrent infections _____

memory problems falls _____

aspiration recurrent injuries _____

depression _____

6. Has your client smoked cigarettes or any other tobacco products in the last 5 years?

yes, please give details

7. Does your client have any other major health problems (ex: cancer, etc.)?

yes, please give details
