

by *Janice McCauley*

[Parkinson's disease](#) is a progressive neurological disorder that affects 1.5 million Americans. Approximately 2,400 of them live right here in the Ozarks and many need specialized services to help manage the symptoms. While PD is manifested in many ways, it affects each patient differently. The cardinal

Parkinson's clinic

established at CoxHealth



Patient Betty Hannon is evaluated by Dr. Scott Duff at the Parkinson's clinic.

signs of PD are tremor, rigidity, slowness of movement and balance problems. PD patients can also experience sleep problems, depression, anxiety and many other symptoms. While there is no cure for this disease, treatment with medications, therapies and surgery can often improve the quality of life for individuals with Parkinson's.

To better serve Parkinson's patients and their caregivers, [Cox Rehab Services](#) and [Ferrell-Duncan Clinic](#) have established The Parkinson's Clinic of the Ozarks. The clinic was created in response to a need expressed by the Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks, the local chapter of the National Parkinson Foundation.

Often Parkinson's patients are referred to therapists outside the doctor's office for evaluation and treatment. For some patients this may mean several separate consultations, sometimes spread over a period of months. This is particularly difficult for people who live outside Springfield. According to

Dr. George F. Wong III, medical director of the clinic, many patients travel great distances to seek help. "One of the advantages of the assessment clinic is one-stop shopping where patients can be seen by multiple disciplines in one day," Wong says. "The doctors also like this concept because we have the input of several professionals at the time we see the patient."

The clinic provides comprehensive clinical and social assessments for PD patients. A team comprised of a board-

certified neurologist, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, a nurse and a social services worker performs the evaluations. Drs. Scott Duff, Stephen Otto, Papaiah Sreepada, Rodney Quinn and George Wong each rotate through the clinic to see new and established patients.

Each member of the team evaluates the patient differently. The occupational therapist looks at how well a patient can perform activities of daily living, like eating and grooming. The physical therapist evaluates the patient's mobility and balance, and provides instruction for caregivers to assist the patient at home. The speech therapist evaluates the patient's voice and swallowing. It is common for Parkinson's patients to have diminished voice volume and problems swallowing, which can lead to patients aspirating liquid or food into the lungs. The therapists can recommend specific exercises or equipment to help manage these symptoms.

The social services worker screens patients for problems with sleeping and depression. The nurse discusses medications and side effects. Sometimes medications wear off and patients experience dramatic differences in their ability to function throughout the day. Patients are given information about resources in their communities as well as information about support groups sponsored by the Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks.

Frank Bolt of Mountain Grove was one of the first patients to be evaluated at the clinic. Bolt, 71, has twice been elected mayor of Mountain Grove and is now an associate commissioner in Wright County. In addition, he works out at the gym and works in his yard and gardens. The first symptom he remembers was a tremor in his hand nine years ago. Since that time Dr. Rodney Quinn, a neurologist, has treated him. He also attends Parkinson's support group meetings at Cox North, which is where he first heard about the clinic.

"The clinic staff were very professional," Bolt says. "I was treated with respect and dignity."

When he was evaluated at the Parkinson's Clinic, the physical therapist recommended two therapy sessions to assist with his gait and balance. He was referred to a therapist in his own community and has continued the program at the local gym.

The Parkinson's Clinic of the Ozarks is open to patients Tuesdays and Wednesdays. For information about the clinic, call 269-3616. ❖

Janice McCauley is the manager of Cox Senior Advantage.

GOOD SAMARITAN FUND

*touches lives**by Lisa Alexander*

Neva Blakey worked 18 years at a good job with good insurance. She worked hard and enjoyed what she did. But one day while on the job a fork lift load shifted and 350 pounds of crushed, stacked cardboard came down on her. Blakey suffered brain and spinal cord injuries that caused her immense pain. She valued her job, so despite her injuries she was back at it shortly after the accident.

*Neva Blakey*

Blakey thought she had seen the worst of things. Then she received a bigger blow. She was diagnosed with breast cancer. Doctors also discovered two lumps had grown together making the situation even more complicated. The lump was removed and since then Blakey has spent her days in and out of CoxHealth receiving chemotherapy.

"They told me I only have a 50 percent chance of survival, but that's at least a chance and I have to do everything I can to try and live," Blakey says. "I'm not ready to die."

During her illness Blakey's employer let her go. The medical bills, along with daily expenses, began to add up. Blakey says she began losing her will to live because she had lost hope. "I had always paid my bills, I had never owed people or not been able to take care of myself," she says. "Suddenly everything changed and I didn't know where to turn."

That's when the [Cox Healthcare Foundation](#) stepped in to help with the Good Samaritan Fund.

The Good Samaritan Fund is a helping hand for CoxHealth patients who need assistance paying their medical bills. It reached out to nearly 200 patients last year thanks to the generous donors who supported it. The Good Samaritan Fund has the kind of impact that is seen in the smile that now rests on Neva Blakey's face.

"When I heard that my remaining bills at Cox had been paid, I cried," she says. "It brought my spirits back up and gave me new strength because I could stop worrying about the bills and put all my energy into getting better.

"God has designed special halos for the doctors and nurses and people who help patients like me."

During her last chemotherapy visit, 47-year-old Blakey displayed a renewed will to live and says she's determined to find a way to give back for the help she received from the Good Samaritan Fund.

To make a donation to the Good Samaritan Fund or to support health care, contact the Cox Healthcare Foundation at 269-7109 or send your tax deductible gift to: Good Samaritan Fund, Cox Healthcare Foundation, 3525 S. National Ave., Suite 204, Springfield, Mo. 65807. ❖

Lisa Alexander is the president of the Cox Healthcare Foundation.

Support Groups

ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) — Call 886-5003, toll free 1-888-386-1200

Awake (sleep disorders) — Call Cox Regional Sleep Disorders Center, 269-5575

Before & After (organ transplants) — Call Ceann McGowan, 732-7688

Brain Injury — Call Denise DeToy, 865-4295

BRIDGES Support Group (mental illness) — Call NAMI of Southwest Missouri, 864-7119

Cardiac Discussion Group (adult cardiac patients and their families) — Call 269-5506

Caring Hearts (children with heart problems and their families) — Call Children's Heart Center, 269-6350

Compassionate Friends (parents who have lost a child through death) — Call Mary Ann Hale, 887-7089

Crohn's Disease and Colitis — Call Margaret Lindsey, 885-3446

Detach with Love (Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics) — Call 889-1463

Diabetes (Cox Support Group) — Call Lynda Weiser, 269-3900 or 269-6891

Family & Friends of People with MS — Call 882-8128

Friday Group (Multiple Sclerosis) — Call 882-8128

Heart Shockers (for individuals and families of patients with implantable cardioverter defibrillators) — Call Kim Osterloh, 875-3297

HOPE (cancer) — Call Hulston Cancer Center, 269-INFO

Image Reborn (breast reconstruction) — Call Elaine, 875-3259

The Lie is Dead (Narcotics Anonymous) — Call 866-7392

Love Me Tender (breastfeeding) — Call Cox Women's Center, 886-LADY

Lupus Support Group of the Ozarks — Call 887-1560 or 1-888-328-8613

Lymphedema — Call Jan Weiss, 269-5500

New Hope (Gynecological Cancers) — Call Joy Lamberson-Klock, 883-9372

Ozarks Help (herpes) — Call 875-6424

Ozark Food Allergy Support Group — Call Sandy Sheeley, 886-7518

Parkinson's Group of the Ozarks/Young Onset Parkinson's Support Group — Call Janice McCauley, 269-3616

Parents of Alcoholics (Al-Anon) — Call 836-1065

People with MS — Call 882-8128

Reach Together (breast cancer) — Call Cox Women's Center, 886-LADY

RESOLVE (infertility) — Call Cox Women's Center, 886-LADY

Scleroderma — Call Gerry Robertson, 866-4297

SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) — Call Danielle Conti-Owens, 866-8471

Sjogren's — Call Sue Harp, 725-3527

Stroke Copers — Sharon Lowery, 269-9980

United Ostomy Association — Call Frank Ott, 881-6853