

## Guidelines on Selecting Guest Speakers for Support Group Meetings

### How to select a guest speaker

Parkinson's NSW Support Groups provide friendship, non-judgemental support and evidence-based advice for people diagnosed with Parkinson's, their carers and family members.

Our Support Groups function within local communities or geographic areas but they are not autonomous; they are part of Parkinson's NSW and supported by employees of this organisation.

**It is recommended that guest speakers be chosen with the values and objectives of Parkinson's NSW in mind, in order to provide consistency of information and avoid delivery of advice that is not evidence-based.**

Parkinson's NSW can provide tips and contact details for potential speakers. Please contact:

Felicity Jones  
Support Group Coordinator  
T: 02 8051 1900  
E: felicity.jones@parkinsonsnsw.org.au

### Examples of interesting guest speakers

Examples of guest speakers who can deliver evidence-based information include:

- A neurologist who specialises in movement disorders
- A GP with extensive Parkinson's experience
- A nurse with extensive Parkinson's experience
- A licensed Allied Health practitioner with Parkinson's experience – such as a psychologist, dietician, physiotherapist, social worker, speech therapist, exercise physiologist, or occupational therapist
- An art or music therapist with experience in supporting people living with Parkinson's
- A physical trainer, or yoga or Pilates instructor who understands the special needs and physical challenges of people living with Parkinson's.

- Other practitioners or service providers who can provide information relevant to the age of people living with Parkinson's – such as an optometrist, audiologist, a provider of mobility aids or home modifications, or a local representative of the National Disability Insurance Scheme or My Aged Care
- People who are experts in their field who can provide non-medical advice relevant to people living with Parkinson's – for example lawyers and financial advisors
- People living with Parkinson's who are continuing to live their best possible lives and willing to share advice on how they manage it – for example community leaders, businesspeople, artists, media personalities, frequent travellers, etc.
- People who can share information helpful to the operations of your Support Group – such as the editor of the local newspaper who can make suggestions on gaining local publicity, an accountant or bookkeeper, etc.

**It is best to avoid potential speakers who wish to sell products or services directly to Support Group members – particularly alternative medicines or therapies which have not undergone large scale, peer-reviewed scientific trials.**

## **How to invite a guest speaker**

A letter of invitation to a potential guest speaker should reflect the personality and the values of the organisation writing it. A good speaker invitation letter should be easy to read, respectful and clear, with all the information your guest speaker needs to make a decision.

Regardless of whether you use email or regular mail, make sure these basic components are included in your speaker invitation:

- The name, date, and venue of the Support Group event or meeting
- The theme or focus of the event or meeting
- Why you think they would be a great speaker for your Support Group
- Why participating as a guest speaker would benefit them
- How they can contact you

On the following pages you will find examples of an invitation email and regular letter for your use.

## Sample invitation email

Dear <name>,

I would like to extend an invitation on behalf of the <name> Support Group for you to be guest speaker at our <regular meeting or event name> on <date>.

Our Support Group provides friendship, non-judgemental support and evidence-based advice for people diagnosed with Parkinson's, their carers and family members.

We are extending this invitation to you because <insert enthusiastic comment about the potential speaker's qualifications and experience>.

This occasion would also provide you with an opportunity to <introduce your services OR share your thoughts and interesting experiences> with the members of our Group.

The details of the <meeting or event name> to which we are inviting you are:

Date: <Day Date Month Year>

Time: <Number am/pm>

Venue: <Name and address of venue, plus directions if required>

Please advise by return email if you are able to accept this invitation. If you have any questions, please telephone me on <number>. In the meantime, please let me know if you would like further information on Parkinson's and our Support Group if that would be helpful.

Regards,

<Your name>

## Sample invitation letter

<Mr/Mrs/Ms Name>  
<Address Line 1>  
<Address Line 1>  
NSW <Postcode>

Dear <Name>,

### Invitation to speak at <Name> Support Group

I am writing as Leader of the <Name> Support Group to cordially invite you to be guest speaker at our <regular meeting or event name> on <date>.

Our Support Group provides friendship, non-judgemental support and evidence-based advice for people diagnosed with Parkinson's, their carers and family members. We also provide social opportunities which help to overcome the feelings of isolation which can often accompany Parkinson's.

We are extending this invitation to you because <insert comment about the potential speaker's qualifications and experience>.

This occasion would also provide you with an opportunity to <introduce your services OR share your thoughts and interesting experiences> with the members of our Group who represent a wide cross-section of the <location name> community.

The details of the <meeting or event name> to which we are inviting you are:

**Date:** <Day Date Month Year>  
**Time:** <Number am/pm>  
**Venue:** <Name and address of venue, plus directions if required>

Please call me on <phone number> to advise whether you are able to accept this invitation.

In the meantime, please let me know if you would like further information on Parkinson's and our Support Group if that would be helpful.

Sincerely,

<Name>  
Support Group Leader