

Mo Morgan: background statement

Some of the branch know of me as co-ordinator, team leader and teacher of the 'Dance for People with Parkinson's', Edinburgh (DforPwP's) class. I also attend as many branch and Young Parkinson Group gatherings as I can, enabling me to expand my knowledge of Parkinson's. However, my particular interest for being involved with people with Parkinson's arises from my personal connection to this debilitating and degenerative neurological condition. My Mum was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2008.

As a graduate of Goldsmith's College, London University my career has encompassed an eclectic mix of professional performance, art, teaching and lecturing, most recently qualifying with the Pilates Foundation. My teaching in fitness, movement and health had already led to my interest in specialist populations allowing a natural combination of much of my expertise within the 'DforPwP's' class.

I attended the 2010 World Parkinson Congress (WPC) in Glasgow as a participant to further enhance my knowledge and appreciation of the condition. Through my involvement with 'Dance for Parkinson's', I was invited to assist (along with 4 other UK practitioners) in presenting 'Dance for Parkinson's' with Olie Westheimer, (executive director of Brooklyn Parkinson's Group and) initiator of the 'Dance for Parkinson's' program with the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG). This experience led to the founding of our UK network of practitioners, in this specific field of dance. Earlier this year the 'Dance for Parkinson's UK Network' held our first 2 day event, 'Introduction to 'Dance for Parkinson's' at Roehampton University, London for over 30 interested parties and guests from throughout Europe and the USA.

During the WPC 2010 in Glasgow, I suggested that a 'debrief presentation' for those branch members who were unable to attend the actual congress would be useful. This suggestion was taken up by the branch and I subsequently wrote and presented a number of power-point presentations on various sessions I attended. I look forward to a- sharing more knowledge I acquire from sessions I attend at WPC Montreal, with the branch and support groups on my return and b- giving feedback from research results abstract (that has been accepted for poster presentation at WPC, Montreal), 'Would regular dance participation improve cognitive functioning in people with Parkinson's?'. (I undertook this research with a neuro-psychology student as part of her M.Sc. project)

In my own small way I hope that my involvement, work and volunteering may help speed a cure or at least help people with Parkinson's better manage the condition whilst also giving me skills and particular insight into assisting my Dad with caring for Mum, as her condition inevitably deteriorates. The WPC Glasgow in 2010 was a life changing experience, full of hope and inspirational. I'm thrilled and honoured to be representing the branch at WPC Montreal and will ensure the financial commitment to my trip will be utterly worth the investment.