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Louisiana Tech's Parkinson Resource Center Nursing Student Scholars

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Presenter Information

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Louisiana Tech's Parkinson Resource Center Nursing Student Scholars

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Background A diagnosis of Parkinson's disease (PD) impacts the individual diagnosed as well as their family and carepartners. Parkinson's Disease is a chronic progressive neurodegenerative disorder caused by the loss of neurons in the substantia nigra of the brain resulting in a dopamine deficiency. Common symptoms of PD include resting tremors, slow movement, rigidity, postural instability, freezing, micrographia, mask-like expression, difficulty swallowing, loss of smell, mood disorders, sleep disorders, hallucinations, and memory difficulties. Due to the wide range of symptoms, PwP require a health care team approach to treat their symptoms and improve quality of life. People with Parkinson's (PwP) in rural areas such as north Louisiana and south Arkansas have limited access to PD specialists and resources. The Parkinson Resource Center (PRC) at Louisiana Tech was created by Edmond J. Safra Visiting Nurse Faculty scholars, Dr. Tara Haskins and Dr. Donna Hood through a grant from the Parkinson's Foundation. The Center has a two-fold purpose: 1) raise community awareness and PD self-efficacy in those with PD and their care partners, and 2) develop the next generation of PD advocates through the Nursing Student Scholar program.

Method Student scholar impact is evaluated through a pre-test, post-test design comparing student scholars with a control students.

Discussion Student scholars, selected for a one-year experience, use key national resources for self-directed education about PD, current treatments and therapies for PD, and to connect with existing resources for PD. They organize available resources, develop tools for data collection, coordinate and participate in outreach visits, communicate with individuals seeking information, work with faculty to increase available resources, and complete weekly journaling of their experiences.