

# PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT THROUGH VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS TO PATIENTS WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE AND THEIR CAREGIVERS: A SCOPING REVIEW

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## Introduction

- Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative condition that produces physical, cognitive, and psychological symptoms.
- Psychosocial support is important for individuals with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers because they are at an increased risk of experiencing social isolation.
- The purpose of this scoping review was to answer the following research question: What are the factors associated with providing psychosocial support to individuals with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers through virtual support groups?

## Methods

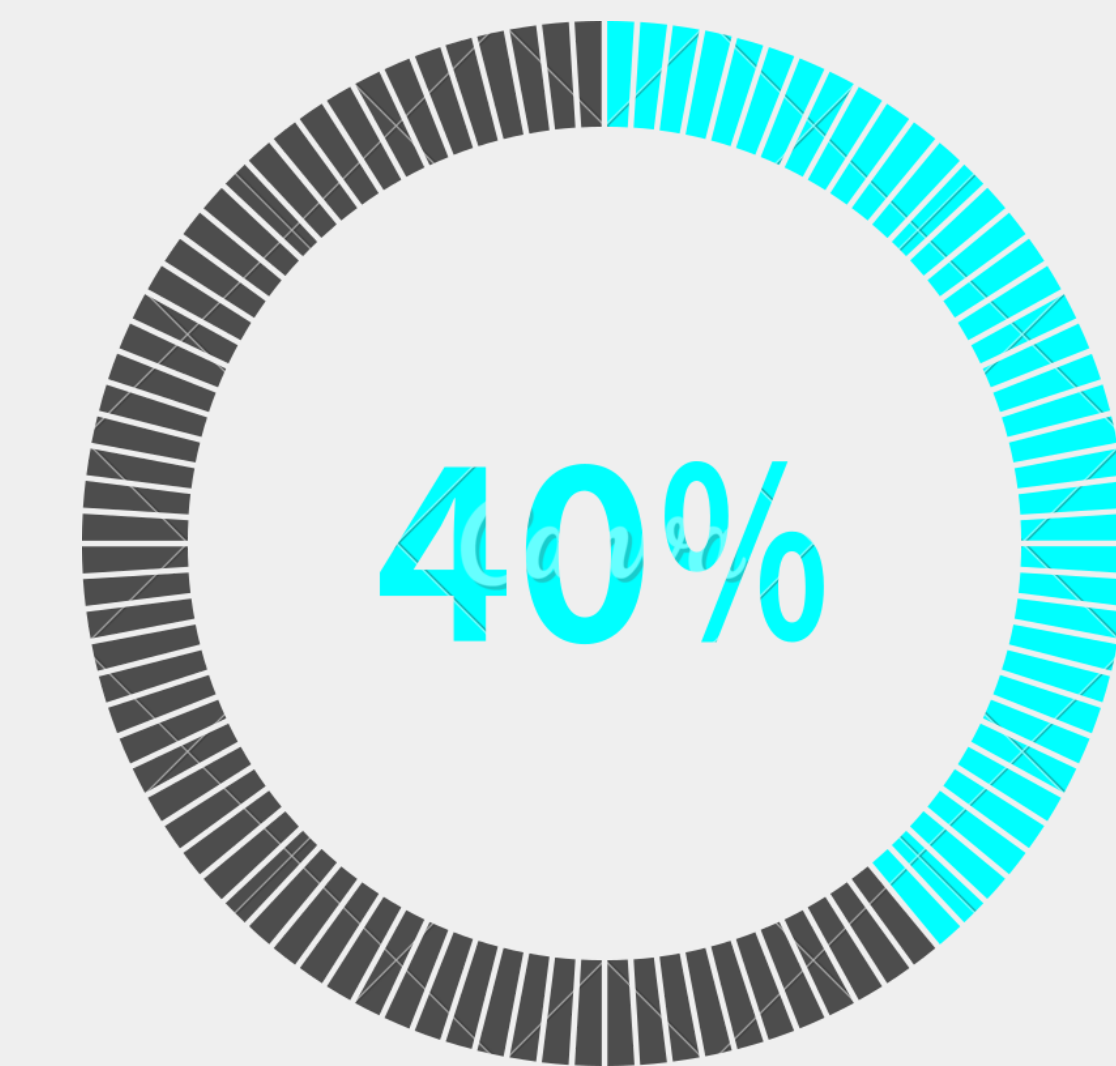
The 5 step framework presented by Arksey and O'Malley was utilized. The following databases were searched by two reviewers to identify relevant studies: Scopus, MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, and PsycINFO. Studies were selected and charted if they discussed virtual support groups for individuals with Parkinson's disease or their caregivers. Studies were excluded if the principal participant group was not PD or if they focused on activity based support groups. Google was utilized to identify grey literature about the experiences of individuals with PD and their caregivers within virtual support groups.

## Conclusions

- There are health and accessibility benefits associated with providing psychosocial support through virtual support groups.
- To maximize the benefits of virtual support groups, it is recommended that they are tailored to individual needs and preferences.

## Results

- Virtual support groups appear to provide an effective form of psychosocial support to individuals with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers.
- The benefits derived from virtual support groups are influenced by situational and contextual factors. Specifically, the benefits are enhanced for individuals with Parkinson's disease when the group shares similar characteristics outside of their diagnosis, a health professional moderator is present, and when their preferred communication medium (i.e., forum discussions, video calls, or phone calls) is utilized. More research is needed regarding the factors that influence how caregivers experience virtual support groups.
- There are currently more available virtual support groups tailored to individuals with Parkinson's disease than caregivers of individuals with Parkinson's disease.
- Virtual support groups are particularly important for individuals with restricted access to resources, including those who have difficulty leaving their home or are unable to locate in-person support groups in their geographical area.



- 40-50% of individuals with Parkinson's disease suffer from depression
- 40% of caregivers do not participate in social or leisure activities

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