

Early Parkinson's patients waiting too long to seek medical evaluation

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FIGURE 1

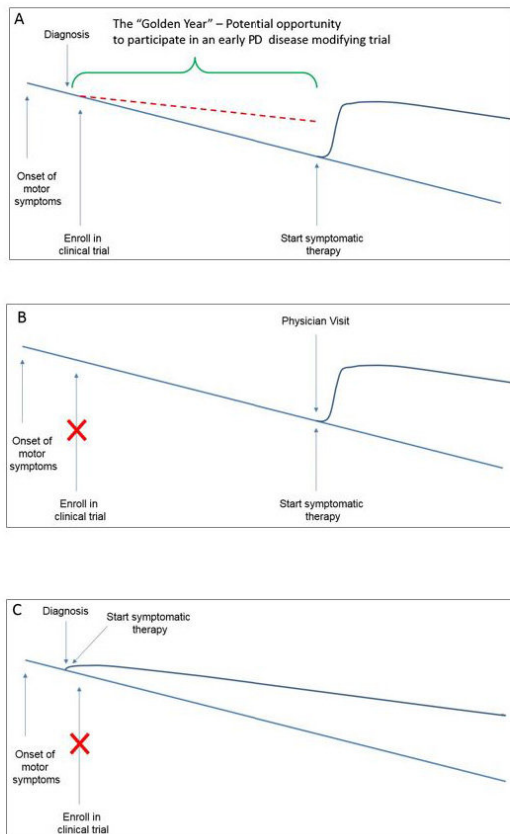


Figure 1. Relationship between time of diagnosis, need for symptomatic therapy and the opportunity for a patient to participate in an early PD disease modifying therapy trial. Credit: University of South Florida

The time between diagnosis and the institution of symptomatic treatment is critical in the effort to find a cure for Parkinson's Disease (PD). A paper published in *Nature Partner Journal: Parkinson's Disease* notes too many early PD patients wait too long before seeking medical attention, or start taking symptomatic medications before they are required, thereby dramatically shrinking the pool of candidates for clinical trials.

Parkinson's disease is a disorder of the central nervous system that affects [movement](#). Symptoms include tremors, stiffness, and slow and small movement. The pace of progression varies among patients, making the months following diagnosis crucial to researchers studying the disease's progression.

"The critical time of about one year from when the patient can be diagnosed with early PD based on mild classic motor features until they truly require symptomatic therapy can be considered the Golden Year," said lead author Robert A. Hauser, MD, director of the Parkinson's & Movement Disorder Center at the University of South Florida. "It is during this early, untreated phase, that progression of clinical symptoms reflects the progression of the underlying disease."

Hauser says that in order to determine whether or not a potential disease slowing therapy is actually working, they must be able to compare the therapy to a placebo without interference from symptomatic treatment. Otherwise, they won't know if the therapy is slowing the disease's progression or if they are just seeing the effects of symptomatic treatment.

This requires patients to seek assessment soon after they notice the onset of tremor or slow movement. In addition, physicians should consider referring patients to clinical trials soon after diagnosis and delay prescribing symptomatic medication until it's necessary. If a patient waits until symptomatic [treatment](#) is necessary, the opportunity to participate in these crucial [clinical trials](#) is lost.

More information: Robert A. Hauser. Help cure Parkinson's disease: please don't waste the Golden Year, *npj Parkinson's Disease* (2018). DOI: [10.1038/s41531-018-0065-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41531-018-0065-1)

Provided by University of South Florida

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