Parkinsons Disease

Licensing
Has the driver told DVLA about their Parkinsons Disease? They must, by law, as it is a notifiable condition that may affect their driving in the future even if it does not do so now. The driver will be driving illegally if they haven’t told DVLA.

• Visit https://www.gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving for notifiable conditions and the forms to use.
• Visit http://www.driving.org/membership for DIA webinar 2 on drivers with diverse needs for more licensing information.

What is Parkinsons Disease?
Visit reputable websites e.g. http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Parkinsons-disease/Pages/Introduction.aspx

What does it do to someone’s driving?
Driving symptoms that happen directly as a result of Parkinsons can be found in research papers (see the DIA webinar on working within the law when we talk about evidence based practice!) - but here are a few.

• Denial and lack of insight – difficulty understanding the faults.
• Visual processing causing vehicle positioning issues. (drifts left / right in lane)
• Visual discrimination poor in low light or low contrast conditions.
• Being slower to react to unexpected stimuli. e.g. driving towards a traffic light, you can expect it might change - but if something totally unexpected happens the reaction is slower.
• Reactions generally slow.
• Difficulty with:
  • higher speed work,
  • 360 degree awareness
  • forward planning and
  • anticipation in faster settings - dual carriageways etc.
• Difficulty paying attention to more than one thing at a time, so busy town work may be an issue.
• Driving on autopilot. Fine in ordinary familiar settings, but take the driver to unusual unknown junction layouts and they may struggle. A driver is licensed to drive anywhere and if they only drive familiar routes this is not an argument that they are fit to continue driving - diversions occur due to road works etc and unexpected things happen on familiar routes.
• Medications commonly cause sudden unexpected sleepiness - or indeed, actual sleep. Sleepiness is also a symptom of PD so it is a double whammy. The driver MUST NOT drive if affected. BUT be aware that on lessons the adrenalin will be running and can keep the person alert. They usually do better during lessons than when unobserved during normal driving.

• Understeering - late braking (i.e. slow start of use of controls) etc caused by movement initiation problems and poor cross-body coordination.

www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition