

THE AMERICAN VETERAN
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SEGMENT: PARKINSONS CLINIC

JIM BENSON, HOST: VA IS RAISING THE BAR WHEN IT COMES TO TREATING THE 75-THOUSAND VETERANS WHO ARE LIVING WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE. FIVE YEARS AGO, CONGRESS OPENED THE DOOR TO STATE OF THE ART CARE IN THE VA SYSTEM.

KAREN REICHARD, WIFE OF PARKINSON'S PATIENT: HE'S JUST SUCH A DIFFERENT MAN FROM THE MAN I MARRIED THAT I FEEL SO, SO SORRY FOR HIM BECAUSE HE WAS STRONG.

REBA HOLLINGSWORTH, REPORTER: SOME TOUGH DAYS FOR KAREN REICHARD AND HER HUSBAND RAY. SHE REMEMBERS HIS DAYS IN THE MARINE CORPS. NOW, SHE KNOWS HIS DAILY STRUGGLE WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE.

HOLLINGSWORTH: RAY HAS TROUBLE SPEAKING BECAUSE THE DISEASE IS PROGRESSING FAST.

KAREN REICHARD: I SAW A DIFFERENCE PUTTING THE KEY IN THE LOCK TOOK LONGER THAT KIND OF STUFF. I JUST PUT IT OFF AS HE WASN'T AGING WELL. AT 45 YEARS OLD YOU KNOW...THEN HE STARTED HURTING HIMSELF AT WORK.

HOLLINGSWORTH: WITH HIS WIFE BY HIS SIDE, MARTIN LOUDECKY IS FIGHTING HIS OWN BATTLE WITH PARKINSON'S. THE 66-YEAR-OLD COAST GUARD VETERAN WAS DIAGNOSED IN 1993.

LOUISE LOUDECKY, WIFE OF PARKINSON'S PATIENT: I SAW A CHANGE IN HIS ABILITY TO HOLD THINGS. AND ONE OF THE BIG THINGS WAS REACHING AROUND AND TRYING TO GET HIS WALLET OUT OF HIS BACK POCKET.

MARTIN LOUDECKY, US COAST GUARD VETERAN, PARKINSON'S PATIENT: YOU LOSE STRENGTH IN YOUR LEGS, YOU LOSE STRENGTH IN YOUR ARMS.

HOLLINGSWORTH: BOTH COUPLES TURNED TO PHILADELPHIA'S WHICH STANDS FOR PARKINSON'S DISEASE RESEARCH EDUCATION AND CLINICAL CENTER, BETTER KNOWN AS "PADRECC." PHILADELPHIA IS ONE OF SIX PADRECC'S IN THE V-A SYSTEM. THE OTHERS INCLUDE RICHMOND, HOUSTON, LOS ANGELES, SAN FRANCISCO AND THE PORTLAND/SEATTLE HOSPITAL. THEY PRACTICALLY FORM A NECKLACE AROUND THE NATION.

DR. MATTHEW STERN, MD, PADRECC DIRECTOR, PHILADELPHIA VAMC: PARKINSON'S DISEASE IS A VERY COMMON NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASE. IT AFFECTS A VARIETY OF SYSTEMS IN THE BRAIN, BUT MOST PROMINENTLY THE MOTOR SYSTEM.

HOLLINGSWORTH: AND IT'S A CHRONIC, PROGRESSIVE DISORDER WITH NO CURE.

HOLLINGSWORTH: ON THE RESEARCH SIDE, DOCTOR JOHN DUDA WORKS TO FIND THE CAUSE.

JOHN DUDA, MD, PADRECC CO-DIRECTOR, PHILADELPHIA VAMC: A LOT OF MY WORK IS LOOKING AT THE BRAINS OF PEOPLE THAT HAVE PARKINSON'S DISEASE, STUDYING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE DEGENERATION THAT WE SEE TO TRY AND SEE WHAT COMES FIRST. WE DO WHAT WE CAN TO TREAT THE SYMPTOMS, TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND DECREASE THE DISABILITY OF PATIENTS WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE.

HOLLINGSWORTH: WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT PHILADELPHIA'S PARKINSON'S CENTER IS THERE'S SOMETHING CALLED "ONE-STOP SHOPPING." THAT MEANS ALL THE EXPERTS ARE HERE -- ALL UNDER ONE ROOF.

KAREN REICHARD: HE GETS THE SPECIALIZED ATTENTION AND THEY DON'T CARE HOW LONG IT TAKES.

STERN: IN THE CASE OF PATIENTS WITH PARKINSON'S DISEASE, THEY NEED PHYSICAL THERAPY, THEY NEED PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING.

HOLLINGSWORTH: MARTIN LOUDECKY COMES HERE OFTEN FOR TREATMENT. A YEAR AGO, HE RECEIVED DEEP BRAIN STIMULATION -- A SURGICAL PROCEDURE TO HELP CONTROL HIS MOVEMENTS. A SMALL DEVICE IS IMPLANTED INTO HIS BRAIN. ELECTRICAL PULSES THEN STIMULATE IT.

MARTIN LOUDECKY: I THINK I ENJOY LIFE A LITTLE BIT MORE. I'VE REALIZED WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH.

DUDA: I'M HOPEFUL THAT WE WILL UNDERSTAND THE CAUSE AND COME UP WITH A CURE FOR PARKINSON'S DISEASE IN MY LIFETIME. MOST OF THESE ARE WORLD WAR II VETERANS, KOREAN WAR VETERANS. GUYS WHO HAVE DONE SO MUCH FOR OUR COUNTRY. I THINK IT INSPIRES US TO DO AS MUCH AS WE CAN FOR THEM.

BENSON: CELEBRITIES LIKE MICHAEL J. FOX AND THE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE OF STEM CELL RESEARCH HAVE PUT PARKINSON'S DISEASE IN THE SPOTLIGHT. DR. JOHN DUDA HAS RECEIVED A GRANT FROM THE MICHAEL J. FOX FOUNDATION TO STUDY THE DISORDER.

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