Parkinson's Disease Public Forum

9 April 2026

Speaker Bios

Chair

Simon Lewis | Professor of Cognitive Neurology | Parkinson's Disease Research Clinic, Macquarie University

Professor Simon Lewis is a Consultant Neurologist and Professor of Cognitive Neurology at Macquarie University. He has published over 300 peer review papers, 2 books and 8 book chapters and has attracted over $10 Million in funding from various sources including the NHMRC, ARC and Michael J Fox Foundation to support his research interests targeting Dementia and Parkinson's. He is the Clinical Lead for the Australian Parkinson's Mission.

In 2014, he was awarded the Leonard Cox Award by the Australia and New Zealand Association of Neurologists for achievements of an early career neurologist who has already made a significant contribution to neuroscience.

Speakers

Natalie Allen | Associate Professor of Physiotherapy | The University of Sydney

A/Prof Natalie Allen is an Associate Professor in the Neurological Physiotherapy team within the Discipline of Physiotherapy at the University of Sydney. Natalie is recognised internationally as an expert on physiotherapy interventions for people with Parkinson's disease. Natalie leads a research team in three key areas: 1) development of interventions to improve safe mobility and reduce falls; 2) exploring the potential for exercise to assist in the management of pain; 3) investigation of models of service delivery, including the use of technology and exercise self-management.

Natalie's research expertise includes clinical research of a variety of methodologies including randomised controlled trials (RCTs), uncontrolled trials, observational, translational and qualitative studies, and systematic reviews. She regularly presents her work nationally and internationally and has been invited to present at prestigious international Parkinson's disease conferences. Her work is published in top journals in the fields of rehabilitation and clinical neurology.

Abstract: Role of Exercise in PD

Exercise is now recognised as one of the most powerful, accessible, and evidence-based interventions for people living with Parkinson's disease. This lecture will provide a clear, lay-friendly overview of why physical activity is so important in Parkinson's disease, drawing on key published studies that show exercise can improve mobility, balance, strength, mood, sleep, and overall quality of life. Emerging research also suggests that regular exercise may support brain health by promoting neuroplasticity and slowing functional decline.

The presentation will explain, in simple terms, how different types of exercise—such as aerobic training, strength training, balance work, flexibility, and task-specific practice—benefit both motor and non-motor symptoms. Importantly, the lecture will translate this research into practical, achievable advice. Attendees will be given clear tips on how to start safely, how much exercise is recommended, and how to adapt activity to different stages of Parkinson's disease. Strategies for overcoming common barriers such as fatigue, fear of falls, and lack of motivation will also be discussed.

Florin Gandor | Associate Professor of Neurology | Macquarie University

A/Prof Florin Gandor is a neurologist and movement disorders specialist at Macquarie University Hospital, where he focuses on Parkinson's disease, atypical Parkinsonian syndromes and swallowing problems. He obtained his Doctor of Medicine (MD) from Charité Medical University Berlin, Germany, in 2006, and his specialist qualification as a neurologist in Germany in 2014. He has extensive international experience, having trained in both Berlin and Sydney, and held a senior consultant neurologist position at a movement disorders hospital in Germany until 2024 and was awarded the prestigious Robert-Wartenberg award and lecture in 2021. He now leads Macquarie University Health's smart therapies program for treating advanced Parkinson's Disease.

Abstract: Role of Smart Therapies in PD

As Parkinson's disease progresses, standard oral medications may become less effective and can lead to fluctuations (wearing off), dyskinesias (involuntary movements), and troublesome non-motor symptoms (e.g. anxiety). This lecture will provide a clear, lay-friendly overview of device-assisted ("smart") therapies for people with advanced Parkinson's disease, explaining how these treatments are designed to deliver more consistent symptom control when tablets are no longer sufficient. The presentation will summarise evidence from published clinical studies on the main options, including apomorphine infusion, fos-levodopa infusion, intestinal levodopa (gel) therapy, deep brain stimulation (DBS), and MR-guided focused ultrasound. Each therapy will be explained in simple terms - how it works, what symptoms it aims to improve, and what benefits and limitations have been shown in research studies.

A major focus of the lecture will be timing and suitability. Attendees will learn who may benefit from these therapies, when they should be considered, and why delaying referral can sometimes limit options. Key practical questions will be addressed, including how cognitive symptoms, age, medical comorbidities, and lifestyle factors influence treatment choice.