

# AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION, INC

Authored by  
**mohammad looti**

November 11, 2025

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

mohammad looti (2025). *AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION, INC.*  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCALES. Retrieved from <https://scales.arabpsychology.com/?p=68759>

## AMERICAN PARKINSON DISEASE ASSOCIATION, INC

**Primary Disciplinary Field(s):** Non-Profit Health Advocacy; Neurology; Public Health

### 1. Core Definition

The **American Parkinson Disease Association, Inc. (APDA)** is a prominent non-profit organization dedicated to combating **Parkinson's disease (PD)** by providing comprehensive services, educational resources, and funding critical research. Established to alleviate the substantial physical, emotional, and financial burdens faced by individuals diagnosed with PD and their care partners, the APDA operates through a national network that ensures localized support and accessibility. It functions fundamentally as a crucial bridge between scientific advancements, clinical care, and the patient community, striving not only to find a cure but also to improve the quality of life for those currently affected by this complex neurodegenerative disorder. The association recognizes that effective management of Parkinson's requires a holistic approach, encompassing emotional support, physical therapy referrals, pharmacological guidance, and active community engagement.

Unlike purely research-focused organizations, the APDA maintains a strong emphasis on immediate patient and family assistance. This dual mission involves generating and disseminating reliable information regarding diagnosis, treatment options, and coping strategies. Its definition of support extends beyond simple recommendations, encompassing the mobilization of dedicated support teams and the establishment of local centers staffed by professionals knowledgeable in **movement disorders**. This practical, grassroots approach distinguishes the APDA within the broader landscape of neurological health advocacy groups, positioning it as a frontline resource for thousands navigating the daily challenges of life with Parkinson's disease across the United States.

### 2. Etymology and Historical Development

The APDA was founded in 1961 by Fred Springer, who recognized the profound lack of centralized information and support systems available for Parkinson's patients during the mid-20th century. At that time, understanding of the disease, including its pathological basis (the degeneration of dopamine-producing neurons in the **substantia nigra**), was still nascent, and treatment options were significantly limited. Springer's vision was to create a robust national entity capable of elevating public awareness, advocating for governmental funding, and directly assisting patients in managing symptoms that often included tremor, rigidity, bradykinesia, and postural instability.

The organization's early development focused heavily on establishing regional chapters and information centers, aiming to decentralize services and adapt support structures to local needs.

Key historical milestones include the growth of its network of **Information and Referral Centers** and the initiation of research grant programs specifically targeting junior investigators to foster long-term commitment to PD research. The evolution of the APDA paralleled major scientific breakthroughs in PD treatment, particularly the introduction and refinement of levodopa therapy. As the complexity of Parkinson's became clearer--including its non-motor symptoms like depression, cognitive impairment, and sleep disturbances--the APDA expanded its resources to address these broader facets of the illness, cementing its role as a leader in patient-centric care advocacy.

### 3. Organizational Mission and Structure

The core mission of the American Parkinson Disease Association is encapsulated in three primary pillars: patient services, education, and research. The organizational structure supports this mission through a centralized National Headquarters that governs strategic initiatives, fundraising efforts, and the allocation of research grants, while relying heavily on a network of chapters and **APDA Centers for Advanced Research and Information & Referral (I&R) Centers** located throughout the country. This decentralized model ensures that the national organization's goals are translated into tangible, accessible services at the community level.

The structure involves a National Board of Directors, a Scientific Advisory Board composed of leading neurologists and researchers, and professional staff dedicated to program management and development. The I&R Centers, often affiliated with university medical centers or neurology clinics, serve as local hubs providing direct patient consultations, facilitating support group meetings, and offering referrals to specialized care providers, such as physical, occupational, and speech therapists. This dual structure--national strategy paired with local execution--is essential for reaching diverse patient populations, particularly in underserved geographical areas where specialist neurological care may be scarce. Furthermore, the organization is committed to financial transparency, ensuring that a significant portion of all funds raised is directed toward programmatic services and critical research initiatives rather than administrative overhead.

### 4. Key Programs and Services

The APDA offers a diverse portfolio of programs designed to address the multifaceted challenges of **Parkinson's disease** management. One of the most critical services involves the deployment of local support teams and the facilitation of peer-to-peer support groups, which provide emotional validation and practical advice exchanged between individuals facing similar struggles. These groups are often supervised or advised by licensed social workers or movement disorder specialists associated with APDA's I&R Centers.

Education forms a major component of the APDA's service delivery. This includes publishing

extensive patient guides, booklets, and newsletters covering topics ranging from initial diagnosis and medication management to adaptive exercise routines and dealing with advanced-stage symptoms. The organization frequently hosts educational seminars, webinars, and national conferences featuring experts in neurology, psychiatry, and rehabilitation, ensuring that both patients and healthcare providers have access to the latest scientific and clinical information. Additionally, the APDA provides **financial assistance programs** aimed at helping patients cover costs associated with prescription co-pays, respite care, or necessary medical equipment that may not be fully covered by standard insurance plans, thus directly alleviating immediate financial stress on families.

## 5. Research Funding and Collaboration

A significant pillar of the **APDA's** mission is the aggressive funding of scientific research aimed at understanding the etiology, progression, and ultimately, the cure for Parkinson's disease. The APDA's research program focuses on investigator-initiated grants, particularly supporting early-career researchers through fellowships and starter grants. This investment strategy is crucial for cultivating the next generation of researchers dedicated to **neurodegenerative disorders**. The organization's Scientific Advisory Board meticulously reviews proposals, prioritizing innovative projects related to genetic mechanisms, novel therapeutic targets, and improved symptomatic treatments.

Furthermore, the APDA works in close conjunction with other major non-profit entities in the field. Notably, the association often collaborates with the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research. This collaboration is strategic, pooling resources to raise funds and facilitate further research on the disease. While the APDA maintains a strong focus on immediate patient needs and community services, its collaboration with organizations like the MJFF ensures a robust national effort in scientific discovery, promoting synergistic efforts rather than competition, thereby accelerating the pace of translational research and the development of new **Parkinson's-based organizations** and clinical trials.

## 6. Significance and Impact

The impact of the **American Parkinson Disease Association, Inc.** is measured both in the quantifiable success of its research funding and, more importantly, in the qualitative improvement of life for PD patients. By providing readily accessible information and support groups, the APDA reduces the isolation often associated with chronic neurological illness. It empowers patients and caregivers through education, enabling them to become proactive participants in their own treatment plans and to advocate effectively for their needs within the healthcare system. The APDA plays a vital role in translating complex medical findings into practical, actionable advice for the layperson.

On a broader scale, the APDA is a critical voice in health policy and public awareness. It drives campaigns to educate the general public about **Parkinson's symptoms**, reducing stigma and promoting early diagnosis. Its persistent advocacy ensures that Parkinson's disease remains a priority for federal health agencies and legislative bodies, influencing funding allocations for research and social services. The continuous presence of APDA I&R Centers nationwide guarantees that whether a patient lives in a major metropolitan area or a rural community, they have a reliable, non-commercial source of expertise and emotional support tailored to the unique progression of their disease.

### Further Reading

[American Parkinson Disease Association \(Official Website\)](#)

[Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research \(Official Website\)](#)

[National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke \(NINDS\) - Parkinson's Disease Information](#)