



St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center

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NEWS RELEASE

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Barrow Golf Clinic Improves Quality of Life for People with Parkinson's Disease

In February, 140 professional golfers will play to win at the Waste Management Phoenix Open. But at a local country club, 25 golfers will play to beat their incurable disease and improve their quality of life.

The Muhammad Ali Parkinson Center at Barrow Neurological Institute offers the one-of-a kind clinic once a year. This year's turnout is the highest in the history of the five year program, with participants ranging from 40 to 85 years of age.

"Many of our participants have never been able to play golf or because of their disease haven't been able to play in many years," says Margaret Anne Coles, program manager at the center. "Parkinson's causes them to lose a bit of their confidence and ability to play the game. We not only want them to gain back their confidence, we want them to have fun and enjoy a sport they might not otherwise get to play."

The five-week clinic includes one hour of group golf instruction by a PGA professional and education about managing Parkinson's disease while being physically active. The goal of the clinic is not to master the game of golf, rather to improve self-esteem, strength, balance, stamina and posture — crucial aspects of improving the overall health of people with Parkinson's.

"The golf clinic we offer is unique in so many ways," says Coles. "The PGA professional has Parkinson's disease so not only is he able to teach our participants, he is able to truly understand them on many different levels. This allows everyone to relax and enjoy playing golf rather than being intimidated by a very challenging sport."

Approximately 25 people with Parkinson's participate in the clinic, which is held at Sun City Country Club. The clinic will conclude on Tuesday, Feb. 16, just one week before the Phoenix Open. Participants will have the opportunity to test their skills in contests such as the longest drive and a putting challenge. Each participant will keep a score card and prizes will be given at a luncheon following the tournament.

"This gives participants an opportunity to practice what they've learned," says Coles. "It isn't about who makes the longest drive or putt, it's about celebrating their accomplishments with their fellow golfers, loved ones and family members.

We want our participants to realize they are all winners for taking the initiative to improve their quality of life by getting back on the green."

— St. Joseph's —