



# THE PARKINSONIAN

NORTHWEST PADRECC/Parkinson's Disease Research, Education & Clinical Center

## Cognitive Testing And Parkinson's Disease

By *Natasha Carney, MA, CSP*

In addition to the motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease, some people can experience cognitive symptoms. Similar to the physical slowness caused by Parkinson's, mental slowing can also occur. This cognitive slowing is called bradyphrenia and can affect conversation, participation in hobbies or other activities, and the ability to complete day-to-day tasks. Patients are often asking what type of issues they can expect to have with memory and thinking. It is important to note that this slowing is not specific to memory as most people believe.

### Impairment can also be seen in:

**Attention:** It may be difficult to attend to something, particularly if many things are going on at one time.

**Problem solving and abstract thinking:** This includes everything from deciding what shirt to wear to complex arithmetic problems.

**Language:** Word-finding difficulties.

**Organization of visual information:** Including reading maps or matching shapes.

Many of our enrolling studies offer some degree of neuropsychological testing. These tests are mostly paper-and-pencil tests, designed to assess memory functioning, levels of attention,

and problem-solving skills. Once the tests are scored, they are compared to scores of people of the same age and with similar education levels. If a patient has neuropsychological testing early in the disease, the scores are used as a baseline that future tests are measured against to determine if there has been any decline. It is not necessary to sign up for a research study to have neuropsychological testing done. If you feel that you are experiencing cognitive changes, particularly if they are interfering in your work or day-to-day tasks, it is important to bring it up with your provider. He or she may be able to help you figure out if your cognitive symptoms are a side effect of medication, if they could be caused by fatigue, stress, or depression, or if there is something more significant occurring. If you and your provider feel it is necessary, you can receive a referral for a neuropsychological assessment.

Unfortunately there is no "quick fix" for cognitive decline. However, our brains are always changing and forming new connections in a process called neuroplasticity. Through exercise and compensation strategies it is possible to improve functioning.

### References:

- <http://health.yahoo.net/experts/drmao/4-exercises-sharpen-your-brain>
- [http://www.pdf.org/en/cognitive\\_impairment\\_pd](http://www.pdf.org/en/cognitive_impairment_pd)

### SOME HELPFUL TIPS:

- ✓ Keep active! This refers to both physical and mental activity. Exercise has been shown to play an important role in keeping us mentally sharp by increasing blood flow to the brain. You do not need to run a marathon or bike to the store to see these results! Taking a daily walk around the neighborhood can help, too.
- ✓ Keeping mentally active is very important. Challenge yourself with the daily crossword puzzle or Sudoku game. Finally, try using your non-dominant hand to do routine tasks (brush your hair, brush your teeth, hold a spoon, throw a ball, etc). This stimulates the opposite side of your brain, again, encouraging blood flow. By learning new things, it is possible to enhance the aforementioned neuroplasticity.
- ✓ Take notes, make lists, and use reminders. Keep track of appointments and important dates on a calendar.
- ✓ Do important tasks while alert (fatigue may worsen symptoms).
- ✓ Review and rehearse new information several times.
- ✓ Ask for new information to be repeated if you did not hear or understand it the first time.
- ✓ If a task seems intimidating, break it down into smaller chunks. Then, tackle each smaller chunk one at a time.



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### WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

This newsletter is yours, and we think you should be involved. If you have any art, poems, stories, or articles you would like to share with other Parkinson's patients, **please e-mail them to [nwpadrecc@va.gov](mailto:nwpadrecc@va.gov) with "Newsletter submission" as the subject line.**

**Or mail to:** Portland VA Medical Center/P3-PADRECC  
3710 SW US Veterans Hospital Rd., Portland, OR 97239

# Traveling with Parkinson's Disease

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Travel for most of us means time spent with family, seeing new places, and enjoying a relaxing vacation. Traveling gets our bodies moving, which is great therapeutic exercise for PD. But how can you prepare for a safe and fun trip despite limitations related to your health? Let's talk about some ways to help keep travel a fun and refreshing activity.

- 1 Always travel with a companion and carry a medical alert card (similar to those provided by the National Parkinson Foundation) to explain that you have Parkinson's disease and what the symptoms may look like. Also, carry a list of medications and scheduled administration times.
- 2 When traveling by plane, carry your medication in your carry-on and keep some in each of your bags. You never know when bags with all of your medications can become misplaced, causing a delay or cancellation of your trip.
- 3 Refill your medication 1-2 weeks prior to your trip. That way you have a full supply available to bring with you to your destination and you won't have to worry about finding a pharmacy

while you are away.

- 4 Bring a copy of your doctor's contact information, pharmacy information, a brief medical history, insurance card, and an emergency contact name and number (other than the person with whom you are traveling).

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**"For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move."**

**-Robert Louis Stevenson**

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- 5 Try to pack lightly, including loose comfortable clothing and shoes!
- 6 Pack snacks and carry a bottle of water at all times for those medication doses that are due while you are out and about.
- 7 Request a handicap-accessible room from the hotel/motel at which you are staying. If you require a wheelchair, request to borrow one from the hotel. Most hotels provide this service for free or with a small fee.
- 8 Schedule a short nap (30 minutes) into your daily itinerary. Even if you don't sleep during this time, simply

taking the time to relax and recharge can make the day's activities manageable and allow you to enjoy your time more.

- 9 If traveling by air, request transport from the door to the gate so you do not spend your energy getting to the plane instead of on your vacation. Also, check as many bags as possible.
- 10 Utilize travel books about handicap-accessible travel. If there is a travel agent available, explain your medical needs to see what suggestions they have to make the trip most enjoyable for you and your travel partner(s).

- 11 If crossing time zones, take your medications on schedule based on your home time zone for the first day of travel, even taking an extra dose or two if you are traveling for 24 hours straight. Then get on the new time zone schedule the first day you are at your destination location.

The most important thing to remember is that this is supposed to be a rejuvenating and enjoyable trip! Preparation for the unexpected will help make that come true.

*Safe travels everyone!*

## Be Aware In Care

The National Parkinson Foundation would like to help people with Parkinson's understand the risks associated with hospital stays, help to prepare for a planned or unplanned hospital visit, and develop strategies to get better care.

Often there can be a lack of awareness at hospitals about mental confusion and other serious symptoms that can result from poorly-managed PD. There may also be a lack of awareness about the importance of timing with Parkinson's medications and about the safety of taking common medications for nausea, depression, and psychosis in addition to Parkinson's medications. Also, some hospital pharmacies may not stock the full selection of PD medications.

To help you to be the best advocate for your own care, the National Parkinson Foundation has put together kits that aim to help people with Parkinson's get the best care possible during a hospital stay.



### EACH KIT INCLUDES:

- Hospital Action Plan
- Parkinson's Disease ID Bracelet
- Medical Alert Card
- Medication Form
- Parkinson's Disease Fact Sheet
- "I Have Parkinson's" Reminder Slips
- Thank You Card
- Magnet

The kits are free and are available by calling **1-800-4PD-INFO (1-800-473-4636)** or by visiting **www.awareincare.org**

## Check out our newly updated website!

The PADRECC website provides information about Parkinson's Disease and other movement disorders, as well as services available to veterans and their caregivers.



### Here are some things you can find on the website:

- PADRECC clinic, staff, and contact information
- Information about Parkinson's disease and its treatments
- Information about support groups and outside resources
- Patient Education events
- Video library

[www.parkinsons.va.gov/northwest](http://www.parkinsons.va.gov/northwest)

## Using Multiplex Families to Map Genes that Modify Susceptibility and Age at Onset in Parkinson's Disease (VA IRB # 2371)

**Dr. Kathryn Chung** is conducting this research study to identify genes that increase a person's risk of developing Parkinson's disease (PD) or related disorders. The goal of this study is to better understand and treat PD and other related disorders. If a gene or genes that cause(s) PD can be identified and characterized, the diagnosis and treatment of PD will be improved. The overall goal of this study is to find genes that increase the likelihood of developing Parkinsonian symptoms and certain PD-related problems, such as difficulties with thinking and memory.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you have two or more individuals in your family that are living with Parkinson's disease. Your family members must also enroll in this study.

This study involves one visit to the Portland VA Medical Center. At this visit, you will undergo a physical examination, questions about your family history, a brief test of thinking and memory and have a blood draw of about four tablespoons. This visit will last for about 2 1/2 hours.

This is a research study and not for treatment or diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. You may not benefit from participating this study. However, by serving as a subject, you may help us learn how to benefit patients in the future. There is no compensation for participation in this study. For more information on how to participate, please contact Susan O'Connor RN, Study Coordinator at (503) 220 – 8262 extension 53262 or by mail at 3710 SW US Veterans Road, P3-PADRECC, Portland, Oregon 97239.

## The Effects of Vitamin D on Balance in Parkinson's disease (VA IRB #: 2393; OHSU eIRB # 6482)

**Dr. Amie Peterson** is conducting this research study to examine the effect of vitamin D on balance in Parkinson's disease patients. This study involves a total of six visits to Oregon Health & Science University and lasts 16 weeks with an additional 8 weeks of follow-up. You must be able to walk 50 feet without the use of a cane or other walking device. You must be over age 50 and have no history of renal stones, or hypercalcaemia. You must have at least 1 or more near falls per month (some balance problems). You must not be taking another type of vitamin D supplement. You will have tests of your thinking and memory, questionnaires about your balance, neurological examinations, tests of balance and strength, and diaries of near falls and falls. You will be taking calcium supplementation and either vitamin D or a sugar pill for 16 weeks. Neither you nor the study staff will know which pill you will be taking. The first and last visit will last for two and a 1/2 hours and the second, third, and fourth visit will last for a half hour. Each visit will occur four weeks apart. You will be compensated \$10.00 for each visit you complete for a total of \$60.00. This is a research study and not for treatment or diagnosis of PD. You may not benefit from participating in this study. However, by serving as a subject, you may help us learn how to benefit patients in the future. For more information on how to participate, please contact Brenna Lobb, MS MPH, Study Coordinator, at (503) 220-8262 extension 51871 or by mail at 3710 SW US Veterans Road, Portland, Oregon 97239.

## Reducing Dyskinesia in Parkinson's disease with Omega 3 Fatty Acids (VA IRB # 2907; OHSU IRB # 8012)

**Dr. Kathryn Chung** is conducting a research study looking at the safety and effectiveness of Omega 3 Fatty Acids. The purpose of this research study is to measure the safety (side effects) of an Omega 3 Fatty acid called docosahexanoic acid (DHA) and measure the dyskinesia (involuntary movements) in Parkinson's disease (PD). In order to take part in the study, participants must: have Parkinson's disease, be about to start levodopa, and be able to stand for one (1) minute unaided. This study will last for one and a half (1.5) years and will involve six

(6) visits. The first visit is a screening visit and includes a neurological examination and completion of several questionnaires. After the screening visit you will be randomized to either DHA or placebo (sugar pill). Neither you nor the researchers will know which pill you will be receiving. The next five (5) visits are overnight stays in the Oregon Clinical and Translational Research Institute (OCTRI) at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). You will be admitted to the OCTRI the evening before study tests begin. Your usual PD medications will not be given over night, so that the Levodopa cycle may be observed the next day. You will be studied on a force plate during performance of simple mental task for an entire levodopa cycle the next day. You will be given intravenous levodopa at these visits. You will be compensated \$50.00 for each overnight visit you complete for a total of \$250.00. This is a research study and not for treatment or diagnosis of PD. You may not benefit from participating in this study but will have a no cost neurological exam. However, by serving as a subject, you may help us learn how to benefit patients in the future. For more information on how to participate, please contact Brenna Lobb, MS MPH, Study Coordinator, at (503) 220-8262 extension 51871 or by mail at 3710 SW US Veterans Road, P3-PADRECC, Portland, Oregon 97239.

## The Washington State Parkinson's Disease Registry (VA IRB# 31675)

If you have a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease or atypical parkinsonism, you are eligible to participate in the Washington state Parkinson's Disease Registry which is co-directed by **Cyrus Zabetian, MD, MS and James Leverenz, MD**. This is a research registry which notifies participants about clinical studies in which they may be eligible to participate. Enrollment occurs by phone and consists of 15 screening questions and an interview about diagnosis, symptoms, medications, and family history. This usually takes less than 30 minutes. For information on how to participate, call toll free (888) 365-9901 or visit our website at [www.registerparkinsons.org](http://www.registerparkinsons.org), where you can start the screening process online.

## Pacific Northwest UDALL Center (PANUC): Clinical Core and Sample Collection (VA IRB # 2332; OHSU IRB # 6154)

**Dr. Joseph Quinn** is conducting this research study to examine the changes in thinking and memory of Parkinson's disease patients over time. A second goal is to determine the role genetics plays in cognitive impairment in Parkinson's disease. You must have a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease to participate in this study.

There are two different groups in this study. The first group is the clinical group. The clinical group involves two visits over five years to the Portland VA Medical Center. At each visit, you will undergo tests of thinking and memory and have a blood draw of about four tablespoons. Each visit will last for about one to one and a half hours.

The second group is the annual group. The annual group involves five visits over five years to the Portland VA Medical Center. At each visit, you will undergo tests of thinking and memory and have a blood draw of about four tablespoons. Each visit will last for about two hours. After the first visit, you will undergo a lumbar puncture. A lumbar puncture is known as a spinal tap. A spinal tap is where a special needle is inserted between bones in your back and fluid is removed. The spinal tap will take about two to two and a half hours. You have the option to undergo a second spinal tap three years after the first spinal tap. You will be compensated \$200.00 for each spinal tap that you complete.

This is a research study and not for treatment or diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. You may not benefit from participating this study. However, by serving as a subject, you may help us learn how to benefit patients in the future. For more information on how to participate, please contact Susan O'Connor, RN, Study Coordinator at (503) 721 – 1091 or by mail at 3710 SW US Veterans Road, Portland, Oregon 97239.

## PORTLAND PATIENT EDUCATION TALKS

All talks listed will be held in the Portland VA Medical Center Auditorium unless otherwise noted. Please arrive early for parking. For more information or to register call (503) 721-1091.

### Living with Huntington's Disease

July 20, 2012, 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Pacific Time. Presented by Bernadette Schoneburg, MD, Movement Disorders Fellow, NW PADRECC. Learn about the diagnostic criteria for Huntington's, the genetic component and genetic counseling, and treatment modalities and options for this disease.

**NEW!** Portland patient education talks are now available via video-conference (V-tel)!

V-tel is not available at all locations for all dates, so call for availability. **503-721-1091** or **1-800-949-1004 ext. 51091**

Boise, ID	Seattle, WA
Brookings, OR	Spokane, WA
Eugene, OR	Vancouver, WA
North Bend, OR	Walla Walla, WA
Roseburg, OR	White City, OR

## PARKINSON CENTER OF OREGON (PCO)

### Paws for a Cause: A Benefit for Parkinson's Disease



Saturday, July 14, 2012. Center for Health and Healing, 3303 SW Bond St, Portland, OR. Bring your friends, furry or human, to this fun benefit walk at the base of the OHSU tram. Choose a 1k or 4k option. Event starts at 9:00 a.m. with registration and vendor area, opening ceremonies at 9:30 a.m., and walks kicking off at 9:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Pet contests will begin at 10:30.

### Save the Date!

### Options & Opportunities Annual Symposium

Saturday September 22, 2012, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Red Lion Jantzen Beach.

### The Great Salt Lick Contest & Art Display – as featured on OPB's Art Beat!

Saturday, September 22, 2012 6:00 p.m. at the Crossroads Art Center, Baker City, OR.

[www.whitdeschner.com](http://www.whitdeschner.com)

## PARKINSON'S RESOURCES OF OREGON

### Advance Directives: Your Life, Your Decisions

July 6, 2012 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Portland Providence Medical Center. Presented by Amy Veatch, Oregon Health Decisions. Join us for a KEYConversations™ Workshop to provide the tools you need to better understand, discuss and document your final health care decisions. Don't miss this opportunity to prepare for the future and gain peace of mind for yourself and your family. Register for this free event by calling PRO at **800-426-6806**.

### Sole Support for Parkinson's



September, 2012 Awareness walks in Vancouver, Portland, Eugene and Medford! Gather friends and family and come out to join the fun and show your support! Proceeds benefit the local programs and services provided by Parkinson's Resources of Oregon.

[www.solesupport.org](http://www.solesupport.org)



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