Alternative and Complementary Therapies in Parkinson’s Disease

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Parkinson’s: What’s in our toolbox now?

- Carbidopa/levodopa (Sinemet)
- Dopamine agonists (Mirapex, Requip, Neupro)
- Selegiline, Rasagilnine, Entacapone
- Amantadine
- Deep Brain Stimulation
- Other supportive medicines and therapies
Western Medicine’s Toolbox

• Good Evidence:
  – Quality of Life
  – Duration of Life
  – Especially early in disease

• But later in disease, benefit is less...
  – Side effects
  – More problems in the disease (constipation...)
  – Surgical treatments only for select patients
So what else is out there?

- Traditional Indian
- Traditional Chinese
- Herbal Medicines
- Yoga/Tai Chi
- Diet
- Exercise
- Music and Art
Traditional Medicine

• Ayurvedic medicine (ancient India)

• Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM)
Ayurvedic Medicine (India)

- Over 5,000 years: since ancient India
- Balance of mind/body, not just disease

- **Shodan** = detoxification, cleansing therapies
- **Shaman** = balance, using yoga and meditation
- **Rasayana** = tonic therapies

- Mucuna Pruriens:
  - used to Parkinson’s for centuries
  - legume that contains levodopa
Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

• Health = Balance of Yin and Yang
• Liver (yin) and invasion of wind (yang)
• Liver’s energy channel is thought to coordinate and smooth movement
• Direct Qi (“chee”) to restore balance, using:
  – Herbs
  – Acupuncture/acupressure
  – Etc...
Herbal Medicines: CAUTION

• Can be frustrating for patient...
• Why your doctor is concerned or reluctant...
  – Lack of evidence, difficult to measure well-being
  – We don’t get trained enough in medical school
  – Not regulated by FDA
  – Legitimate concerns about...
    • Dangerous Drug interactions
    • Serious herbal side effects
    • Purity of contents
Herbal Medicines

• Recently, more interaction with “Western” medicine...

• PDR for Herbal Medicines (600 compounds)

• More research:
  – National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NIH)
  – More centers at university hospitals
Herbs: Gingko Biloba

– Antioxidant
– Circulatory stimulant (brain function, levodopa)
– Help concentration
– Side effect: diarrhea
– Ginseng may overstimulate
Herbs: Ginger

• *Zingiber Officinalis*

• Can help nausea/vomiting upset stomach

• Boiling root in water, or nibbled on
Herbs: Milk Thistle

- *Silybum marianum*
- Used to help liver function for > 2000 years
- May help clear toxins
Herbs: Passion Flower

- *Passiflora incarnata*
- May help agitation and insomnia
Herbs: Evening Primrose Oil

- *Oenothera biennis*
- May increase level of levodopa
- May help decrease tremors
Herbs: Triphala

- *Three fruits: harada, amla, bihara*
- Ayurvedic Medicine
- May help constipation
- May increase bile secretion
- May help digestion
Herbs: St. John’s Wort

- *Hypericum perforatum*

- Used in Germany as a mild antidepressant
- Works like an SSRI

- **NEVER** taken with SSRI, should **not** replace SSRI
- **NEVER** with Blood thinners (aspiring, coumadin, warfarin, heparin, lovenox, etc...)
- **Always ask all your doctors before considering!**
What is *Neuroprotection*?

- Future therapies that will help protect the brain cells that are being damaged in Parkinson’s.
- Therefore, hoping to slow the disease down.
Bad News, OK News, Good News

• **BAD:** Most trials for neuroprotection failed (Vit.E..); antioxidants, etc... best just in diet/exercise.

• **OK:**
  - Creatine under study here at UCSF
  - Co-enzyme Q10, 1200 mg/day
    - antioxidant, larger trial, not advised at this time

• **GOOD:** New research finding what’s going on in cells of Parkinson’s, will hopefully lead to a medicine that slows or stops the disease
Herbal Medicines: CAUTIONS, TIPS

- Avoid “Cures”
- Nothing is proven
- No guarantee of safety
- Again, not FDA-regulated (potency, purity)
- Expensive $$$$
- Not covered by most insurance
Herbal Medicine: CAUTIONS, TIPS

• Advice from licensed herbalists, naturopaths, nutritionist, D.O.M. (Doctor of Oriental Medicine)

• National Center for Compl. and Alt. Med. (NIH)

• Reputable manufactures
  – Address on the label
  – Detailed contents on the label
  – Sealed
Yoga

• 5,000 years of use in India
• Balance in mind/body through practice:
  – asanas (poses) and pranayama (breathing)
• Help balance, strength, posture, flexibility, well-being
• Decrease stress
• Studies on Blood pressure, asthma, digestion

• Widely available: senior, rehab, and fitness centers
• Wide range of styles and difficulty
• Start with basic/beginner class
Tai Chi

- Practiced in Taoism, ancient Chinese
- Movements coordinated w/ mind and breathing
- Hopes to help agility and tranquility
- May help balance, flexibility, heart fitness, well being
- Some versions even seated
Acupuncture and Shiatsu

• Acupuncture
  – 2,500 years in China
  – Tiny needles at certain points (acupoints)
  – Correct imbalance in flow of Qi within the body
  – Few publications, no solid evidence in Parkinson’s
  – But has been shown to have real physio effects
  – Low risk: infection, bleeding, discomfort

• Acupressure (Shiatsu)
  – Some pressure points as acupuncture
Massage Therapy

• Long recognized to help Parkinson’s patients
• Decrease stress, stiffness
• Wide range of choices
  – TCM: Shiatsu = acupressure
  – Swedish: Gentle kneading of muscles
  – Deep Tissue
• Accredited school of massage therapy.
Diet

• Diet:
  – Low saturated fats, especially trans-fats
  – More fruits and vegetables
  – The Mediterranean diet (fish, omega-3’s, heart)
  – Coffee?
  – The PROTEIN Question

  – Beware of fad diets!

  – Kathryne Holden, M.S. (“Cook Well, Stay well” and “Eat Well, Stay Well”…)
  – NPF Pamphlet:
    • Weight gain and loss
    • Constipation and bloating
    • Menus and recipes
Fitness

• At least 30 minutes, 3/x week
  – Stretching
  – Breathing
  – Cardiovascular (walking)
  – Strengthening
  – Balance
• Help of trainer or physical therapist
• Yoga, Tai Chi: as we talked about
Other things that can help...

• Music Therapy
• Dance Therapy
• Art Therapy
• Pet Therapy
Final Points

• Yoga and Tai Chi – great exercise, fun, relaxing, decrease stress
• Some herbal therapies have some rationale, but!!!...
• $$ Cost $$, can interact with meds
• Beware of “Cure-alls”
• “If it sounds to good to be true, it probably is.”
Resources

• National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NIH)
• National Parkinson’s Foundation
  – (800) 327-4545 (free booklets)
• Other
Thank you.