

Taking the stigma out of Parkinson's

The Health Column

1403
2014

09 April 2014

The popularity of the Michael J Fox television series, in which he openly addresses the effects of living and working with Parkinson's, has increased awareness of this disease and how it affects sufferers and those around them.

To further raise public knowledge about the disease, World Parkinson's Day will be held on 11 April with the aim of raising awareness of Parkinson's disease and how it affects individuals, families and the wider spectrum of the community.

Organisers of the event believe greater awareness will cut down the stigma associated with the disease; and enhanced community understanding and awareness will lead to better quality of life for those with the condition.

Parkinson's is a growing neurological condition, or more specifically, it's a disorder of central nervous system and statistics show that about one person in every 500 has Parkinson's. Most people who get Parkinson's are in the age group of 50 or over but younger people are also not spared with one in 20 affected being under the age of 40.

Individuals with Parkinson's don't have the sufficient chemical termed as dopamine and without dopamine people cannot perform many of their normal daily activities at an expected speed - their movements become slower and it takes longer to perform any task. The loss of nerve cells in the brain is the reason behind Parkinson's.

However, that is a broad view and every case of Parkinson's is unique and not everyone observes and witnesses the same symptoms. For example, not all people get tremors and for some, rigidity is the prime symptom. With modern drugs, symptoms can be kept under control.

Scientists and researchers have not yet been able to search a way to cure Parkinson's or cut down its progression, although this is considered to be an area of great research.

Medicines can help a lot and the main aim of pharmacological interventions is to increase the level of available dopamine.

As Parkinson's affects each person differently it is important to individually tailor medication regimens accordingly. Your pharmacist can help with advice and counselling and discussing what the medication is for, what benefits should be expected, possible side effects and their management, drug interactions and how to keep an accurate record so information can be given to the doctor at each visit. It is important that those with Parkinson's are aware of this information.

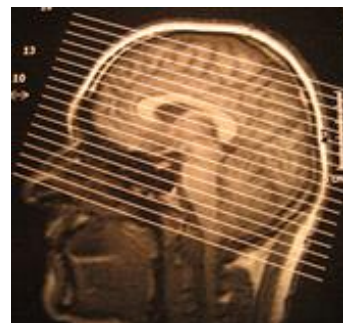


Photo by Ron Balogh | sxc.hu

It is quite common for people to require higher doses of medication and therefore experience side effects as the illness progresses and dopamine production is reduced.

As the disease progresses, the dilemma of balancing the therapeutic benefits as opposed to possible side effects becomes more difficult. The objective is to obtain maximum mobility with minimal side effects but other factors such as diet need to be considered when taking medications.

It is extremely important to gain the maximum benefit from medication while keeping side effects to a minimum. Medication must be taken at the correct dosage time to allow for absorption time and the attainment of therapeutic levels. Most people respond well to education about medication and are able to evaluate the effectiveness of their own medication regimes. It is important that they understand the factors which can negatively influence the effectiveness of medication and how to minimise these.

Advice about Parkinson's is available through Parkinson's Australia (<http://www.parkinsons.org.au>) and pharmacies around Australia providing the "Self Care" health information have a range of care cards to help improve your overall health.

For the nearest location phone the Pharmaceutical Society on 1300 369 772 or log onto the website www.psa.org.au and click on Self Care and then Find a Self Care Pharmacy.

In the meantime, on 11 April join in as people all over the globe walk, run, bicycle, dance, speak, don flowers, attend conferences, deliver speeches, attend dinners, donate money, donate time, and generally give themselves to help find a cure for Parkinson's and spread awareness in this regard.