



Capital Area Parkinson's Society

February 2014 Newsletter

P.O. Box 27565, Austin, Texas 78755-2565

www.capitalareaparkinsons.org



Power for Parkinson's One Year Anniversary Celebration

When: Saturday,
February 22, 2014
4-6 p.m.

Where: Covenant Presbyterian
Church, Eaton Hall
3003 Northland Drive,
Austin, Texas 78757
(Southeast corner Mopac
& 2222)

Questions:
powerforparkinsons@gmail.com
or 512-497-3574

Live entertainment by: Power for
Parkinson's Dance Troupe

Dinner & Party to follow!

Gene Therapy May Hold Promise for Advanced Parkinson's Disease

*Steven Reinberg, HealthDay
Reporter*

THURSDAY, Jan. 9, 2014
(HealthDay News) -- A new,
preliminary treatment involving
triple-gene therapy appears safe and
effective in helping to control motor
function in Parkinson's disease
patients, according to new research.

The therapy, called ProSavin,
works by reprogramming brain cells
to produce dopamine, the researchers
said. Lack of dopamine causes the
tremors, limb stiffness and loss of
balance that patients with the
neurodegenerative disease suffer.

"We demonstrated that we are able to safely administer genes into the brain of patients and make dopamine, the missing agent in Parkinson's patients," said researcher Kyriacos Mitrophanous, head of research at Oxford BioMedica in England, the company that developed the therapy and funded the study.

The treatment uses a harmless virus to deliver three dopamine-making genes directly to the area of the brain that controls movement, he explained. These genes are able to convert non-dopamine-producing nerve cells into dopamine-producing cells.

Although the study results are promising, the researchers suggest they should be "interpreted with caution" because the perceived benefits fall into the range of "placebo effect" seen with other clinical trials.

Experts reacted positively but cautiously to the findings, which were published online Jan. 10 in *The Lancet*. While the treatment seems safe, its potential as a replacement for current therapy still must be proved, they noted.

"The ProSavin study was a positive and important first step for a potential gene therapy for Parkinson's disease," said Dr. Michael Okun, national medical director at the National Parkinson Foundation.

Mitrophanous thinks this new treatment will eventually outperform deep brain stimulation or levodopa.

"Over time, patients need larger doses of levodopa. Its benefit starts to wear off five to 10 years after starting the drug," he said.

"Patients can then try deep brain stimulation, which involves putting wires into the brain that are attached to a battery pack," Mitrophanous said.

"With our approach, the brain cells are permanently modified to make their own dopamine, so you wouldn't have to rely on external stimulation," he said.

Dr. Andrew Feigin, a neurologist at the Movement Disorders Center of the Cushing Neuroscience Institute in Manhasset, N.Y., said the study adds to growing evidence that "gene therapy for Parkinson's disease can be undertaken in a safe and well-tolerated manner."

"But the findings can't be considered conclusive because the trial did not include a placebo or sham procedure," he said.

For the study, Mitrophanous and his colleagues tried three doses of ProSavin in 15 Parkinson's patients who no longer responded well to other treatments. All patients showed significant improvements in motor scores in the 12 hours after they stopped taking their other medications and at six months and a year after surgery, the researchers found.

"It appears that the highest dose of ProSavin provided the greatest level of dopamine production," Mitrophanous said. This led to the greatest improvement in motor scores and consistently less need for levodopa.

Patients injected with ProSavin had mild to moderate side effects. The most common while on medication were involuntary movements (dyskinesias) and switching between mobility and immobility, called on-off phenomena, which occurs as levodopa wears off.

Parkinson's disease affects some 5 million people worldwide.

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Power for Parkinson's

Power for Parkinson's is officially offering nine free classes a week in the Austin/Round Rock area! We hope you will try to attend at least 2/week supplementing those classes with other activities daily. For those of you considering Power for Parkinson's, we hope you'll join us—NO experience is necessary! We're here to help you stay active, have fun, make friends and fight PD! Although PD is a struggle at times, we have a great group of people to share your experiences and exercise with in a relaxed and fun atmosphere. Please remember to bring your water bottles to stay hydrated and dress with light-weight clothing (shorts and short sleeves) and tennis shoes. For more details, see powerforparkinsons.org.

South

Wellmed Senior Community Center
706 Ben White Blvd., Suite 100
Dancing with Parkinson's
Thursdays 2:00–3:00 p.m.

East/Central

Healthsouth Rehab Hospital
1215 Red River, 1st Floor Annex
Dancing with Parkinson's
Mondays 1:30–2:30 p.m.
Strength & Conditioning
Fridays 2:00–3:00 p.m.

North Central

Covenant Presbyterian Church
3003 Northland Drive, 2222 & MOPAC
Fitness for Parkinson's
Tuesdays 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Balance & Stretching
Thursdays 3:15–4:15 p.m.

North Central

Jewish Community Center of Austin,
7300 Hart Lane, Far West & MOPAC
Walking Group
Mondays 9:30–10:30 a.m.

Northwest Austin

Unity Church of the Hills
9905 Anderson Mill Road,
Unity Oaks Room 201
Movement & Balance
Mondays 10:30–11:30 a.m.
Dancing with Parkinson's
Wednesdays 1:30–2:30 p.m.

Round Rock

1611 Chisolm Trail
Move & Shout (Alternates with Chair Yoga)
Thursdays 1:30–2:30 p.m.

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February Membership Meeting

Saturday, February 16 ■ 2:00 p.m.
Medical Office Building, St. David's Medical Center,
5th Floor Conference Room, 3000 N. IH-35

CAPS SPRING ROUNDTABLE

Our February meeting is the spring roundtable discussion and forum. Conducted 2-3 times each year, these sessions allow CAPS members to interact and share experiences with each other. It's an opportunity to learn from your fellow members in a relaxed and non-threatening environment.

Collectively, CAPS members have a wealth of practical experience in dealing with the effects of Parkinson's Disease. Please join us – share your personal experience, ask your questions, and have some fun in the process!

