



# Capital Area Parkinson's Society

June 2015 Newsletter

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

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

## Parkinson's Affects Both Low- and High-Contrast Vision

*Parkinson's Disease Foundation, May 20, 2015*

A new study confirms that people with Parkinson's disease (PD), as compared to healthy individuals, experience trouble with certain aspects of vision, including contrast sensitivity (e.g., distinguishing between shades of gray) and using high-contrast vision at a distance. The results appear in the February 17 online edition of the *Journal of Parkinson's Disease*.

People with PD typically have normal vision when reading black letters on an eye chart—a test for high-contrast visual acuity. Yet they may still have trouble seeing clearly because PD affects contrast sensitivity—the ability to tell apart subtle differences in gray, or the colors of objects, especially in low light. This makes it difficult to see when walking, or driving at night, even if a person's vision tests as 20/20.

For the new study, researchers led by Charles H. Adler, M.D., Ph.D., at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Scottsdale, AZ, evaluated a new tool for testing low- and high-contrast vision sensitivity. They recruited 32 people whose PD was diagnosed, on average, as Hoehn and Yahr stage 2 (mild PD) and 71 healthy

Capital Area Parkinson's Society  
**1st Annual Summer Bash**  
 Night of Dancing and Celebration  
 Thursday, August 13, 2015 • 6:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.  
 Balcones Country Club • 8600 Balcones Club Drive

Tickets: \$75 - May be purchased at [www.capitalareaparkinsons.org/summerbash](http://www.capitalareaparkinsons.org/summerbash)  
 General and Table Sponsorships available

For more information, contact Lina at 512-517-0621 or [summerbash@capitalareaparkinsons.org](mailto:summerbash@capitalareaparkinsons.org)  
 All proceeds go to the Capital Area Parkinson's Society [www.capitalareaparkinsons.org](http://www.capitalareaparkinsons.org)

**Save the Date**  
 Thursday, August 13, 2015

**Bee Gees Songbook**

Attire: Summer Disco (Optional)  
 Invitation to Follow

individuals of similar age to participate in the study. Vision tests were carried out using an iPad® application for which eye charts were developed specifically to evaluate contrast vision. The researchers tested study participants' ability to read black (100 percent contrast) and gray (2.5 percent contrast) letters on a white background, at two different distances, 30 cm (16 inches) and 2 m (6.5 feet).

### Results

Near and far, people with PD scored lower than healthy individuals on the test for low-contrast, indicating impaired visual sensitivity.

On the test for high-contrast vision (black letters), study participants with PD scored the same as healthy individuals when reading close-up (30 cm or 16 inches), but worse when reading at a distance (2 m or 6.5 feet).

Among people with PD, close-up, low-contrast vision worsened with disease severity (with PD progression measured by scores on the standard UPDRS, or Unified Parkinson's Disease Rating Scale, scale of symptoms).

### What Does It Mean?

People affected by PD often complain of blurred vision. Yet complaints are often non-specific, and unfortunately specific treatments are not available. Furthermore, testing for low-contrast vision is often overlooked in standard eye exams for people with PD. The authors of this study advocate testing people with PD for contrast acuity, and suggest that the specially designed iPad® application used in this study could provide a quick screening tool to supplement traditional vision testing techniques. If difficulty with low-contrast vision is diagnosed, then doctors can recommend therapies and lifestyle adjustments to help compensate for this, and allow people with PD to safely continue to do the things they want to do.

Future studies should focus on understanding the mechanism of low-contrast vision in PD and hopefully on treatments to improve low-contrast vision. ■

**Lakeway Support Area Group**  
 C.A.P.S.

**Starting in July**

Meetings: 1st Tuesday of each month  
 Vibra Rehabilitation Hospital of Lake Travis  
 2000 Medical Drive, Lakeway, Texas 78734  
 Phone: 512-263-4500  
 Contact: Tereasa Ford, LBSW at 512-364-3336

Directions: Take Hwy 620 S to Birrell Street (near the Post Office), make a right onto Birrell Street, make a right onto Medical Drive, hospital entrance is on the left.

Support • Outreach • Resources • Education • Information



**Round Support**  **Rock Group**

**Don't Forget!**

Meetings: 4th Tuesday of each month  
Wyoming Springs Assisted Living  
7230 Wyoming Springs Drive  
Round Rock, Texas 78681  
(near the Round Rock Hospital)  
Contact: Donna Hohm at 512-765-7733 or  
dhohm@seniorcarecentersltc.com

*Support • Outreach • Resources • Education • Information*

**Capital Area Parkinson's Society**  
P.O. Box 27565  
Austin, Texas 78755-2565

NONPROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTIN, TX  
PERMIT NO. 352

## June Membership Meeting



**Saturday, June 20 ■ 2:00 p.m.**  
**Medical Office Building, St. David's Medical Center**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, 3000 N. IH-35**

Dr. Michael Soileau, a neurologist, and a recently named director of the Plummer Movement Disorders Center at the Scott & White Neuroscience Institute, will be speaking on "Understanding Parkinson's Disease and Current Treatments."

Dr. Soileau earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Baylor University, graduating magna cum laude. Realizing the errors of his ways, he went on to earn his Medical Degree from the University of Texas Medical School in Houston. After doing his residency at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, he returned to Texas to complete his movement disorder fellowship at UT Medical School.

At the Plummer Movement Disorders Institute, Dr. Soileau has several areas of patient care emphasis, including Deep Brain Stimulation for Movement Disorders, Parkinson's Disease and Related Conditions, Essential Tremor, Huntington's and Other Chorea, Restless Leg Syndrome, Multiple System Atrophy, and others. He is board certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

**Lunch will be provided by Teva Pharmaceuticals. We appreciate their continued support and generosity.**