

Parkinson's news

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“ The Society has set up a Patient Welfare Fund to provide financial assistance to needy patients. You can get an application form from your doctor. For enquires, please write to Chairperson, Patient Welfare and Subcommittee, Parkinson's Disease Society (Singapore), c/o Neuroscience Specialists Outpatient Clinics, National Neuroscience Institute, 11 Jalan Tan Tock Seng, Singapore 308433 ”

Improving Your Balance: a delicate act

The predominant symptoms in early stages of Parkinson's disease (PD) include tremor (or trembling in hands, arms, legs, jaw, and/or face), bradykinesia (or slowness of movement) and rigidity (or stiffness of arms, legs and/or trunk).

As the disease progresses, patients encounter many difficulties with gait, balance, posture and transfer which significantly affect their daily activities. Gait and balance difficulty can lead to recurrent falls that are likely the most devastating consequences of PD. Fear of future fall, in its own right, further leads to restriction of mobility.

Swinging of arms when walking helps most of us in keeping our balance. Unfortunately PD patients have paucity of arm swing as a result of rigidity. In addition, they have episodes of freezing which literally makes their feet “stuck to the floor” when initiating a step as well as “foot dragging or shuffling” which makes tripping easy. Therefore getting rid of rugs and small items on the floor will reduce the incidence of tripping over. Adding railings in hallways and bathrooms will also help in maintaining balance and avoid falls.

PD patients also have difficulty in judging spatial relationship. Thus navigating through doorways and narrow passage can be a difficult task for them. Having a more open space and keeping furniture away from doorways prove beneficial.

Also doing regular exercise by stretching, walking and other physical activities helps keep muscles strong and flexible and improve mobility. A PD patient needs to learn how to re-walk to maximize mobility and reduce incidence of fall. The caregivers too need to learn this to coach the patients.

Some practical ideas include

- Deliberate arm swinging when walking
- Consciously lifting feet to avoid shuffling when walking
- Try to slow down or stop when steps are speeding up
- Don't pivot when turning; instead walk in a wide circle
- Ignore distractions to help control gait and balance and don't rush
- To avoid retropulsion (backward falling) try to lean forward when standing or walking
- Step up and over an actual or imaginary obstacle in the path to continue forward walk
- Try to rock from side to side to overcome freezing episodes
- Use a visual queue of someone walking in front

Dr Prakash Kumar
Singapore General Hospital



Nutritional supplement Creatine on trial for Parkinson's disease

A large-scale clinical trial to investigate if a nutritional supplement creatine can slow the progression of Parkinson's disease (PD) has recently been launched in USA. This health supplement may improve exercise performance. The double-blind, placebo-controlled, phase III study is one of the largest PD clinical trials to date. It has been reported that the study will enroll 1720 people with early-stage PD at 52 medical centers in the United States and Canada. We look forward to the findings from this study which hopefully will lead to better treatment for PD.

Dr Tan Eng King



Parkinson's Disease Drug Pergolide removed from US Market.

A number of studies have shown that one of the Parkinson's disease (PD) drug, pergolide increases the risk of heart problem. Those taking the drug are more likely to have leaky heart valves compared to those not taking pergolide. Due to these reasons the American FDA recently announced that the drug will be being voluntarily taken off the U.S. market because of the risk of serious damage to the

heart's valves. The drug was approved by the FDA in 1988. The risk of leaky heart valves is a known complication but the approximate five times risk as shown by recent studies makes the risk "unacceptable".

We do not know exactly how many patients are currently on pergolide in Singapore. If you are taking pergolide, you should talk to your

doctors first, before stopping the drug abruptly.

Pergolide belongs to a class of drugs called dopamine agonists. This group of drugs is effective against PD. As there are many other dopamine agonists available, it is possible that your doctor would be able to successfully switch you to another dopamine agonist.

Dr Tan Eng King



NNI Selected as a Center of Excellence in the Care and Research in Parkinson's Disease

The National Neuroscience Institute has been selected as one of the 11 international NPF Centers of Excellence in the world outside the United States and the only center of excellence in Asia. The designation was awarded by the American National Parkinson Foundation (NPF).

The NPF, based in the United States, is the largest organization in the world serving persons affected by Parkinson's disease. The NPF Centers of Excellence are awarded to healthcare institutions that meet the criteria for excellence in Parkinson-related research, comprehensive care, and community outreach.

An international panel which made up the independent NPF Center Review Board, has

chosen NNI because of her strengths in the provision of comprehensive 'best-in-class' clinical care to Parkinson's disease patients, in having a well-developed basic and clinical research programme, and in the ability to set the 'gold standard' for care, outreach, and research into Parkinson's disease.

These achievements were made possible by the dedicated multidisciplinary team of doctors, research scientists, nurse clinicians,

therapists, dieticians, and social workers, through a unique partnership between NNI and two major hospitals in Singapore (TTSH and SGH). NNI sees over 1500 PD patients a year, with international referrals ranging from regional countries to as far as the Middle East and countries in the West.

NNI boasts of a well-coordinated research programme ranging from basic science to clinical and translational research, which aims to unravel the etiopathogenesis and disease profile of Parkinson's disease. To reach out to the community, the Centre works closely with the Parkinson's Disease Society of Singapore in organizing a series of public forums, symposiums, and workshops to raise the public awareness of the disease.

NNI is also one of the main movers in the founding of the Asian and Oceanian Section of the International Movement Disorder Society and is honoured to be selected as a host for the inaugural Asian and Oceanian Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Congress in Singapore next year.

Successful battle with Parkinson's disease: a personal account

"I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1996. I was having the symptoms for at least 2 years before I finally consulted a neurologist. Initially, I was dragging my left leg when I walked and had difficulty using chopsticks to pick up food from the plate. I seemed to mess up the dining table whenever I was having my meals. I complained about these symptoms to my doctor who advised me to see a neurologist. That was 10 years ago in 1996.

I was really shocked, when the doctor told me I had Parkinson's disease. I would be on a wheel chair within 10 years. But what could I do? I asked myself. The answer was to accept it and continue to do whatever I could like touring other countries. So I toured China and climbed the Great Wall. I could remember clearly that when I reached a certain station along the wall where tourists could buy a certificate to certify that they have climbed the Great Wall of China, I bought one and I was so happy behaving like a schoolboy receiving a prize from his teacher. I stood high on the great wall and shouted loudly, "I have climbed the Great Wall of China." Guess what I heard, my shouting was echoed back. My dream to tour the Great Wall of China would not have been realized had I not had Parkinson's disease.

I had been very busy with my work and I thought it would be better for me to retire and do whatever I wanted. I have since retired.

I was taking Madopar, and it worked very well on me for the first 5 years that no body was able to tell that I have Parkinson's disease. But from the fifth year onwards, I began to experience motor fluctuations with involuntary movements known as dyskinesias. Together with muscle cramps I felt weak. I also had started hesitations, freezing episodes, and difficulty with my mobility. Communication was a real problem as I had small cramp handwriting and low voice volume.

When I was asked to consider the option for brain surgery by my neurologist, I was shocked to learn that such surgery is being done in Singapore (I thought such surgery could only be possible overseas). After discussing with my family, I sent an email to the PD nurse clinician informing her of my decision for

surgery. I was referred to see Dr. John Thomas, the neurosurgeon who does the brain surgery (deep brain stimulation surgery) for patients with Parkinson's disease. Two months later, the surgery was carried out on me.

After surgery, I could go on without taking any Madopar but I opted to take 62.5 mg 3 times daily and I do not have any of those involuntary movements or muscle cramps. I have gained back my strength with no difficulty getting up from chair or bed. All those freezing episodes and start hesitations have

since disappeared. Now, I am able to drive safely. It was a surprise to my family. Before surgery, my family did not allow me to drive as they were very worried and concerned about my safety as well as the safety of others. My self confidence has returned but not totally, as I was told that surgery is not a cure for my Parkinson's disease. However, I have improved about 80% after the surgery in terms of controlling the symptoms that my neurosurgeon has told me prior to my surgery. I have made it and I am fine now."

Kelvin Cheong King Sing

**6th International Symposium
of the Asian and Pacific Parkinsons Association (APPA)**
20-22 October 2007
Suntec International Convention & Exhibition Centre, Singapore

This meeting is specially for Patients, Caregivers, Nurses, Rehab Therapists, and Allied Health Professionals

UNIQUELY Singapore
www.nni.com.sg

APPA
SINGAPORE 2007
6th International Symposium
October 20-22, 2007

Empowering Lives, Enhancing Care

Register before 15 August 2007 to enjoy special rates!

This meeting will focus on the care of patients with Parkinson's disease and will provide a comprehensive review of the management of all aspects of the disease in a manner that can be easily understood by all. Come learn and be updated of the latest in the field of Parkinsons from an international panel of speakers!

Keynote lectures; plenary sessions; training workshops for nurses, therapists and community carers; platform and poster presentations.

Translation into **Mandarin and Japanese** will be provided via headsets.

Abstract deadline for nurses, therapists, allied health professionals and programme coordinators: **15 July 2007**

More information on APPA available at www.nni.com.sg/APPA

Enquiry & Registration
The APPA-NNI Symposium Secretariat
c/o National Neuroscience Institute
11 Jalan Tan Tock Seng Singapore 308433
Tel: (+65) 6357-7162 / (+65) 6357-7163 | Fax: (+65) 6256-4755 | Email: nni_secretariat@nni.com.sg

Organisers
National Neuroscience Institute Singapore

Co-Organisers
GAS, Ministry of Health, Singapore, T S A O foundation For Successful Aging

Supporting Organisations
○ ASEAN Neurological Association
○ College of Physicians, Singapore
○ Ministry of Health, Singapore
○ Singapore Association of Occupational Therapists
○ Singapore Physiotherapy Association
○ Society for Geriatric Medicine, Singapore
○ Social Service Training Institute, National Council of Social Service
○ Speech - Language and Hearing Association, Singapore

Announcements for 2007

1. Highlights for 2007

- 5 May '07, Sat** : "Living with Parkinson's Disease" Public Forum at National University Hospital cum Society Annual General Meeting (AGM)
Auditorium, Level 3, Kent Ridge Wing 2
2pm to 5.30pm. Call 6772 5849 for inquiries.
- 20-22 Oct '07** : 6th International Symposium of the Asian and Pacific Parkinsons Association (APPA) held at Suntec International Convention & Exhibition Centre. Members of the Society will benefit from reduced registration fees to attend the meeting which is specially for patients, caregivers, nurses and allied health professionals.
- Early Registration (for reduced rates) Deadline: 15 August 2007
More information from website: www.nni.com.sg/APPA

2. Support Group Meetings

Meetings at National Neuroscience Institute @ Tan Tock Seng Hospital

- Venue** : Neuroscience Clinic NNI Level 1
Time : 9.30 AM to 11.00 AM
Registration fees : Free for members of Parkinson's Disease Society
\$2.00/- per person for non-members

Please register by phone with Rina Ho at 6357 7060.

Dates	Topics	Speakers
16/6/07 Saturday 16/6/07 Saturday	Activities of Daily Living - aids and safety English	David Zhang Occupational Therapist TTSH
7/7/07 Saturday 9.30 to 11.00 am	Activities of Daily Living - aids and safety Mandarin	David Zhang Occupational Therapist TTSH
11/8/07 Saturday 9.30 to 11.00 am	Medications for Parkinson's disease English	Dr. Louis Tan Senior Consultant NNI
1/9/07 Saturday 9.30 to 11.00 am	Medications for Parkinson's disease Mandarin	Dr. Au Wing Lok Consultant NNI

Meetings at National Neuroscience Institute @ Singapore General Hospital

- Venue** : Education Resource Centre (Rehabilitation Centre, Blk 1 Level 1)
Time : 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM
All talks in English (with Mandarin translation)

For more information, call Nurse Tan Siok Bee @81253543 or Nurse Stella Wang @91132944

Dates	Topics	Speakers
7 May	Overview of Neurosurgical Procedures for Parkinson's Disease	Mr John Thomas Snr Consultant Neurosurgeon, NNI
4 Jun	Living with Parkinson's Disease	Ms Stella Wang Senior Staff Nurse, SGH
2 Jul	Group Discussion	Participants
6 Aug	Maintaining Safety	Ms Natalie Chew Snr Occupational Therapist, SGH
3 Sep	Community Resources in Singapore	Ms Lee Yung Hsiang Medical Social Worker, SGH

We like to acknowledge



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National Parkinson's Disease Society of Singapore

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