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Is there a relief for Parkinson's Disease?

Transcript: After reading Tim Newman's article, in MNT Newsletter, I was inspired to present this video, because Parkinson's disease seems to be on the increase among the aging Sri Lankan population.

Parkinson's disease is a condition where the nerves of the brain and the other parts of the nervous system are affected. Symptoms about to be discussed are due to loss of nerve cells. What causes this to happen are not noticeably clear.

Parkinson's is the second most common neurodegenerative disorder after Alzheimer's disease.

In the United States, approximately 1.6% of the over 65 group is affected with Parkinson's disease. In Germany, the standard prevalence was 1680 cases per 100,000 of population.

In 2016, an estimated 6.1 million people worldwide had Parkinson's Disease. The number has doubled in the past 25 years.

Data is not available for the incidence in Sri Lanka, but Parkinson's disease is on the rise as more people with PD are getting registered for follow up clinics.

What is the cause or causes of this chronic disabling disease? Let us probe further into this condition to find out how it starts.

Parkinson's disease is a movement disorder that affects the nervous system. Its symptoms occur because of low dopamine levels in the brain.

What is known is that it is caused due to the death of dopamine secreting neurons in the brain. These cells are found in a specific region of the brain called the substantia nigra.

Dopamine is a neuro-transmitter- meaning that it helps to send messages between nerve cells. It is also referred to as a chemical messenger.

It plays a role in how we feel pleasure. It is the opposite of pain, and the experience that makes you feel good.

It makes us aspire a good lifestyle and takes part in our ability to think and plan.

It is made in the brain, by converting the amino acid tyrosine to a substance called dopa and then into dopamine.

The body makes tyrosine from another amino acid called phenylalanine. Tyrosine is found in dairy products, meats, fish, eggs, nuts, beans, oats, legumes, and wheat.

Pork chops, salmon, turkey, and chicken are all rich in tyrosine.

Loss of dopamine affect movement, both skeletal muscles and smooth muscles of the gastrointestinal tract.

This can result in slow shuffling gait, muscular stiffness or rigidity, resting tremor, slowness of movement, and slowed peristaltic movements of the bowel. Mostly, there is cognitive impairment or dementia, depression and anxiety, sleep dysfunction, pain, apathy, sexual dysfunction, and bowel incontinence.

They have a high incidence of bone thinning and fractures. Also, the sense of smell and taste may be diminished in the early stages.

They seem to have a high B vitamin deficiency, and especially when medications like levodopa- carbidopa seem to increase vitamin B6, folate and vit B12.

Constipation is quite common in PD or may be due to the treatment. Chronic constipation can lead to fecal impaction and colon cancer.

Among farmers, there seems to be a high incidence of PD due to the usage of pesticides. It was also revealed that the persons living in the cluster with vineyards had a higher incidence of PD.

In France, vineyards rank among the crops that require most intense pesticide use. Regions with greater presence of vineyards are characterized by higher PD risk; non-professional pesticides exposure is a possible explanation.

A new study finds that the number of new cases per year of Parkinson's disease (PD), and related diseases known as parkinsonism, may have increased over a 30-year period. A possible explanation lies in the dramatic decline in cigarette smoking in recent decades. The research appears in the June 20 online edition of JAMA Neurology.

A person with Parkinson's disease may have clumps of protein known as alpha synuclein, or Lewy bodies, in their brains.

The accumulation of Lewy bodies can cause a loss of nerve cells, leading to changes in movement, thinking, behavior, and mood. It can also lead to dementia.

An earlier study suggested that smokers may have a reduced risk of PD and speculated that the decrease in smoking could lead to a higher incidence of PD decades later.

Recent studies conclude that diets high in animal fat or cholesterol are associated with an increase in risk of Parkinson's disease, in contrast fat of plant origin does not appear to increase risk.

Vegan diet may be protective against PD.

When your doctor tells you that you have PD, cycling and golf seem to help.

A person with PD can cycle quite steadily.

Golf could be a good form of exercise therapy for Parkinson's, and it is a game that you will like, and helps improve balance. Swinging a golf club demands a high level of balance.

The drugs that are given to alleviate symptoms are levodopa (Sinemet), which replenishes dopamine levels.

Oxidative Stress

One cause of cell loss in the substantia nigra is oxidative stress.

Sesame seed extract shows promise for Parkinson's,

Sesame seed husks, a waste product from the manufacture of sesame seed oil, are rich in the antioxidant sesaminol.

Scientists have found that sesaminol protects nerve cells in laboratory cultures from damage and prevents Parkinson's symptoms in an animal model of the disease and reduces oxidative stress factor.

Clinical trials are necessary to determine whether the antioxidant can prevent Parkinson's or slow its progression in humans.

This led Dr. Kojima-Yuasa and colleagues to investigate whether sesaminol, a powerful antioxidant, could prevent nerve cell death in a model of Parkinson's.

Sesaminol, is found in abundance in sesame seed husks, which are a waste product from the industrial extraction of sesame oil.

The protective effect of feeding with small amount of sesaminol, is suitable for use as preventive treatment for Parkinson's disease.

So, the bottom line is that, if you or a loved one shows early signs of Parkinson's Disease, in addition to taking medication prescribed by your doctor, it is advised to start playing golf, cycle, joining clubs to socialize, dance and be merry.

There is much ongoing research for Parkinson's disease, and I have not gone into that, because they are still in the experimental stages.

Hope you like this video talk.

Take care Goodbye for now.