



WHAT IS PARKINSON'S DISEASE?

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a chronic neurological condition named after Dr. James Parkinson, a London physician who was the first to describe the syndrome in 1817. PD is a slowly progressive disease that affects a small area of cells in the mid brain known as the substantia nigra. Gradual degeneration of these cells causes a reduction in a vital chemical known as "dopamine." This decrease in dopamine can produce one or more of the classic signs of Parkinson's disease:

- Resting tremor on one side of the body
- Generalized slowness of movement (Bradykinesia)
- Stiffness of limbs (Rigidity)
- Gait or balance problems (Postural Dysfunction)

It is estimated that over 1 million Americans are affected, more persons than those suffering from Multiple Sclerosis and Muscular Dystrophy combined. Although 15% of patients are diagnosed before age 50, PD is generally considered a disease, which targets older adults.

Parkinson's disease affects one of every 100 persons over the age of 60. Thanks to public health strides and healthier lifestyle choices, many people now live well into their eighties, adding to the impression that the incidence of PD is increasing.

While there is, as yet no cure for this condition, progressive treatments allow many patients to maintain a high level of function throughout their lifetimes.

There is great hope for the future. Researchers have made significant advances, and new treatments have been developed. As scientists continue to learn more about the brain, they faithfully predict that victory over Parkinson's is within reach.

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