

## BASICS OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE PRESENTED AT APRIL MEETING

**D**r. Gunzler, whose speciality is movement disorders, was trained at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York, then moved to Portland, Oregon where he saw many people with PD in the clinics at the Parkinson Center of Oregon and the VA Hospital. He moved to Cleveland and joined David Riley and Tina Whitney at the Movement Disorders Center at University Hospitals. Dr. Gunzler has also joined the Parkinson Study Group, headquartered at the University of Rochester, a group interested in trying to find a cure for PD.

Parkinson's disease was discovered in 1817 by James Parkinson and is a disease with a slow progression. Although PD is primarily associated with tremor, there are non-motor signs of PD, such as constipation, mild depression, loss of smell, sleep problems, etc. Early motor-related symptoms of PD include slight tremor, a shuffling gait, stiffness, and some rigidity. Levodopa was discovered in 1911, but was not every effective. It was not until 1967 that higher doses were prescribed and they worked but taking levodopa alone caused nausea. It was not until 1975 that carbidopa became available, and it was combined with levodopa to become carbidopa-levodopa, a much more successful medication in cases of severe PD.

Dr. Gunzler stressed that carbidopa-levodopa is a symptomatic medication and along with other PD medications simply treats the symptoms but does not slow down the disease. Medications have side effects and sometimes it is necessary to start meds to treat these side effects. He then went on to briefly describe some effective medications. He did mention the recall of a promising new medication, the rotigotine (Neupro) patch. The manufacturer is hopeful that they will fix the problem shortly.

The impact of PD on a person is profound and the individual has to face the challenge in his/her everyday life. How PD affects daily activities has only recently been considered and there is more and more a focus on how to reduce disabilities in daily life. Dr. Gunzler also noted that memory problems in PD are different than those in Alzheimer's disease.

Some promising areas of study and research are Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS), in which Dr. Gunzler is involved, gene therapy and stem cell therapy. The goal of the staff at UH is to not only treat PD with medication but to also diagnose and treat associated conditions like restless leg syndrome and depression.

During the course of his talk, Dr. Gunzler frequently answered questions from the floor and remained after the conclusion for further questions. We welcome Dr. Gunzler to Cleveland and thank him for his time and expertise.

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Referring back to the PAN Public Policy Forum conference in February, in Washington, DC, our member Steve Derman received a personal note from Senator Sherrod Brown acknowledging the conversation he had with Brown's legislative aide at that time and reaffirming Brown's continuing support for PD legislation.

Thank you. Sherrod!

## COMING MEETING

**June 5**

Scott Cooper, MD  
Neurologist, Center for Neurological  
Restoration  
Cleveland Clinic Foundation

“Treating PD Today”

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