

# Cascade Quarterly News

## Parkinson's Disease

### some Facts about Parkinson's Disease

“Parkinson's can progress at a different rate for each person. It is important to work with a knowledgeable health-care team in order to implement a treatment plan that will meet the person's individual needs.”

Parkinson's disease is a chronic brain disorder that impairs a person's ability to move. How does this happen? Well, for reasons that are not yet clear, nerve cells within the substantia nigra (an area in the midbrain) begin to die. One of the major functions of these affected nerve cells is that they produce a neurotransmitter called dopamine. Dopamine is vital for many, many functions in the body, so when dopamine levels in the brain become deficient the symptoms of the Parkinson's disease appear.

The symptoms of Parkinson's usually include tremor, slowness and stiffness, impaired balance and rigidity of the muscles. Other symptoms include fatigue, soft speech, problems with handwriting, stooped posture, constipation and sleep disturbances. The symptoms of the disease

arrive insidiously, and are progressive. As the disease progresses, non-motor symptoms may also appear, such as depression, difficulty swallowing, sexual problems or cognitive

changes. Currently there is no cure, however people can live with Parkinson's for many years.

Once diagnosed, treatment will include medication with a dopamine-like drug to help replace the lost dopamine. Some people with Parkinson's may benefit from surgery, and there is more research happening every day in a search for tools that can help slow or halt the progression of this illness.

The following therapies can also help manage the symptoms:

- Physical therapy helps mobility, flexibility and balance
- Occupational therapy helps with daily activities
- Speech therapy helps with voice control
- Exercise helps muscles and joints and improves overall health and well-being

Parkinson's can progress at a different rate for each



**Aerobic Exercise and Movement Therapy are very helpful for people with Parkinson's Disease.**

## massage therapy: how can it Help?



Illustration of the Parkinson disease by Sir William Richard Gowers from *A Manual of Diseases of the Nervous System* in 1886

Your massage therapist is trained in a variety of techniques that can help to lessen the severity of your symptoms which allows you to feel more at ease in your body as it goes through the changes associated with Parkinson's.

I will now discuss 5 of the more common benefits of your massage therapy sessions:

**Decrease in tremors, temporarily** – muscles become overworked when tremors are occurring, leaving the person feeling tight and fatigued, achy and sore. Massage therapy will help to lessen this tension and encourage a healthy muscle tone to be established.

Stress (mental, physical or emotional) has been shown to be a significant factor in the severity of the tremors associated with Parkinson's disease. Since massage therapy helps to slow and relax the nervous system, stress responses are decreased, which helps to lessen the frequency and severity of tremors and other stress related symptoms.

**Ease Rigidity** – an interesting medical study was published in 2001 entitled 'Pain in Parkinson's Disease' (*Waseem, Gwinn-Hardy, Postgraduate*

*medicine, vol 110/no 5/December 2001*) The study discusses several common causes of pain for people with Parkinson's and concludes that rigidity is the most common cause of pain. The study also concluded that massage therapy is a useful treatment in alleviating the pain.

Treatment techniques aimed at improving joint mobility, both on the table and as a part of a homecare exercise program are very useful in decreasing rigidity. RMTs work gently in mobilizing joints in order to increase range of motion, improve joint health, decrease pain and ease activities of daily life.

**Soothe Depression** – Depression is a state of being that is linked to many causes and which results in altered physiological function in many ways. Massage therapy techniques work to optimize body functioning and can greatly assist in the treatment of depression. For example: Massage therapy increases circulation and nutrient supply to tissue cells, and increases lymphatic drainage of toxins from the body. Massage therapy decreases pain by decreasing muscle tension and joint stiffness, as well as by altering biochemistry through influences on the nervous and endocrine systems. All of these results lead to better

health and well being physically, mentally and emotionally. Treatments can also incorporate very soothing techniques that aid an overall sense of wellbeing and deep relaxation. RMTs are compassionate health care providers who are committed to facilitating wellness for our patients.

**Relieve Sleep and Digestive problems** –

The autonomic nervous system is the part of the brain that controls unconscious or automatic functions in the body. Massage therapy helps this system to balance and the benefit is an improvement in your quality of sleep and your overall digestive function. In the case of constipation, we can also incorporate abdominal massage into your treatment which will directly stimulate the intestines and assist in achieving regularity. This is also something that I teach my clients to do as homecare for self massage and is very helpful.

**Individual symptoms of Parkinson's disease vary greatly. When beginning your massage therapy program, be sure to disclose your concerns to your RMT so that treatments can best be tailored to meet your specific needs.**

## homecare *to help maintain flexibility*

"INSERT QUOTE"

As a person's body is undergoing the changes associated with Parkinson's disease, it is most helpful to engage in relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, visualization and meditation. The more we can encourage a relaxed nervous system, the better off we are – this goes for everyone!

In addition to focusing on relaxation techniques, it is imperative that daily activities be modified to your comfort level. Your endurance will likely change from day to day, so please pay attention to the way you feel and be sure to pace yourself.

Homecare programs are of great importance in managing any chronic

condition. I encourage my clients to be actively involved in their treatments and I work with them to create therapeutic exercises that work for them. I will assist in teaching functional changes to activities of daily life so that you may be supported in the process of managing your symptoms.

Some homecare suggestions you may receive from me are regular walking or other form of aerobic exercise. To help you with balance, flexibility and coordination, yoga and tai chi will be helpful. If you are new to these types of exercises consider joining a class where you can work with an instructor who will

ensure that your movements are done safely and comfortably.

Strengthening exercises may include gym equipment or classes at the rec centre. The pool and hot tub are great tools for hydrotherapy as well. Your RMT will also recommend devices to assist you with your daily life and if needed referral to other health care practitioners.

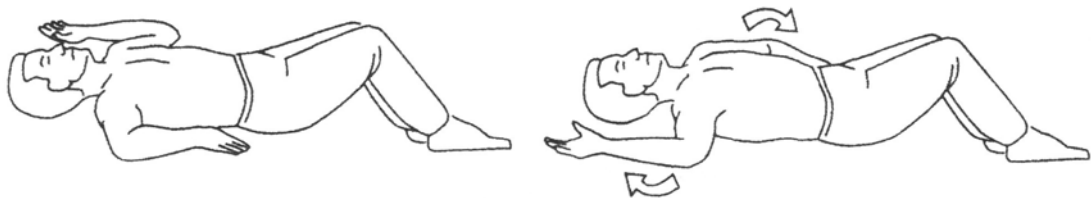
**See page 4 for an example of a homecare exercise that I have found to be useful with people who have Parkinson's Disease:**

## Trunk rotation exercises

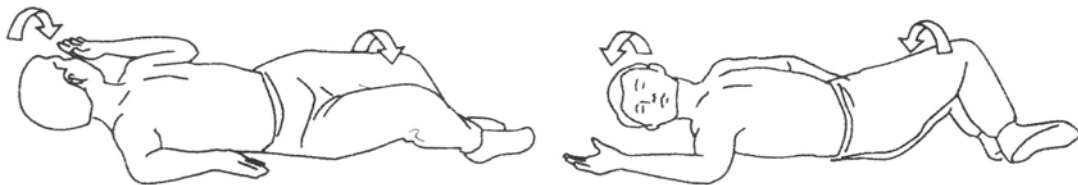
- These exercises can be done on a bed or on the floor - whichever is easier.
- Movements are done slowly, in a relaxed rhythm.
- Practice Part 1 until you are able to do it easily.
- Then move on to Part 2, which focuses on arm movements to help release the shoulder girdle.
- When you are comfortable with both Parts 1 & 2, move on to Part 3, which combines the above actions into a rhythmical exercise.
- These exercises help to maintain mobility and coordination.
- Only do what is comfortable and relaxing for you. This is intended to be an enjoyable movement therapy.



**Part 1: The head rotates in one direction while the legs (with the knees flexed) rotate in the opposite direction.**



**Part 2: Ninety degrees of shoulder abduction, 90 degrees of elbow flexion. One shoulder internally rotates while the other externally rotates. These are performed alternately in a slow rhythmical manner. The legs are not involved.**



**Part 3: The above actions are combined in a smooth relaxed manner.**

## About Cascade Massage Therapy

### My Approach

***I bring over 18 years of bodywork experience and education to the massage table!*** I offer you diverse and comprehensive massage therapy sessions. Your treatment goals are foremost and your needs will be heard and addressed. I utilize both traditional and alternative treatment techniques, and recommend self care tips and exercise options that evolve with your individual healing process.

***My intention is to be a facilitator in the cascade of your healing process and health maintenance.*** I believe that within the human body is the desire and

ability to be well, and through bodywork, I serve to act as a catalyst for this process.

***This is your time*** - I encourage you to enjoy the stillness of your session, and sense the changes occurring in your body while we work - you don't need to be entertaining or start a conversation; that being said, please recognize that I do not read minds. I expect my clients to participate in his or her experience and give feedback when there is any discomfort during the treatment.

***Cascade Massage Therapy is focused on education and prevention.*** It is important that you

know what you can do to help prevent stress, tension, and pain when you are not with me. I allow for time at the end of our session to converse, suggest self care tips and exercises that would be beneficial for you, and answer any questions that you may have.

I believe that prolonged stress, whether environmental, physical or emotional is a primary factor in disease and a true obstacle to healing.

Therefore, ***I welcome you to a peace-filled and relaxing environment where you can experience relief from pain and tension.***

*If you have specific health concerns consult your medical doctor. The information in this newsletter is educational only and is not intended to replace the advice of your personal health care providers.*