



WORLD PARKINSON'S DAY

EL PERIÒDIC



The inheritance of Parkinson's

In the next 25 years, the number of people with Parkinson's may triple due to the increase in life expectancy

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Today, April 11st, World Parkinson's Day is celebrated. A neurodegenerative disorder that affects the nervous system in a chronic and progressive manner and that, currently in Spain, more than 150,000 people suffer from. A number that can even triple, as it is expected that in the next 25 years it will increase even more due to the increase in life expectancy that our neighboring country is experiencing.

Parkinson's disease is characterized by the loss of neurons in the substantia nigra, a structure found in the middle part of the brain. What this loss cause is a lack of dopamine in the body, which in turn causes movement control to be altered and gives rise to typical motor symptoms, such as tremors at rest or stiffness of the muscles.

In addition, if precisely this disease has any factor to take into account, it is that it can manifest itself at any age, despite the fact that it is more frequent in the fifties - known then as «early onset» - and the sixties - more of 95% of those affected -. As statistics show, it is also estimated that between

15% and 25% of people affected by Parkinson's have a family member who has previously developed it.

SYMPTOMS // Motor and other non-motor symptoms are the most common effects that occur during Parkinson's disease. However, it should be mentioned that not all those affected have or maintain the same symptoms, nor is the evolution of these the same in all cases.

Mainly, the effects caused by the disease are usually associated with motor difficulties, with many of them related to movement, sleep disorders or loss of smell.

With regard to non-motor symptoms, these can be classified into four different groups: neuropsychiatric, in which we can find symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions or dementia; those of sleep, divided into those that affect daytime sleepiness, insomnia or fragmented sleep; autonomic ones, which affect sexual dysfunction; and the digestive tract, where we find nausea and constipation.

From the medical institutions, and with the aim of being able to make a diagnosis soon, it is recommended to be attentive to the symptoms that the affected person may present, since some of these are involuntary movements that disap-

pear when sleeping and which worsen with stress.

TREATMENT // The diagnosis of Parkinson's is fundamentally clinical because it is based on the general and neurological examination of the patient and the clinical history. Although there is no definitive treatment to cure this disease, in patients with an initial state of Parkin-

Between 15% and 25% of people with Parkinson's have a family member who has previously had it

It is estimated that 95% of people diagnosed are over 60 years old

son's it has been possible to treat the symptoms with the aim of allowing the patient to be independent for as long as possible.

For pharmacological treatment, medicines are prescribed to enhance the formation of dopamine in the brain or improve its action. In the case of surgical treatment, the surgery acts on the part of the brain that is affected. This intervention is only proposed to certain patients and the criterion used is to not have dementia and not to be very old. This type of treatment helps control the patient's tremors.

Other types of treatment that doctors can suggest to their patients are physical rehabilitation that helps patients not lose their muscle tone, speech therapy to work on vocal training and finally, psychological consultation to receive support and be able to cope better the daily difficulties that Parkinson's entails.

PROGRESSION OF THE DISEASE IN THE ELDERLY // Each person presents a different progression of the disease, but in the case of the elderly it can occur in five distinct stages.

In the first stage is where the symptoms begin, although they do not interfere with everyday life. Sometimes, these symptoms are:

Advice

PROGRESSION OF PARKINSON

STAGE 1: Onset of symptoms
Symptoms begin, but do not interfere with daily life.

STAGE 2: They intensify
Symptoms begin to appear on both sides of the body.

STAGE 3: Loss of balance
Loss of balance and the risk of falls usually begin to appear.

STAGE 4: Living accompanied
It should require a walker and the company of a person.

STAGE 5: Extreme stiffness
An advanced stage where the patient needs a caregiver on an ongoing basis.

tremors and uncontrolled movements in half of the body.

These symptoms intensify in the second phase, where they usually occur on both sides of the body. These are usually tremors or stiff-

ness of the limbs. Symptoms that patients must learn to live with and adapt their daily activities to the presence of limitations.

In the third phase, these are more common and this is where the loss of balance and the risk of falls usually begin. There is also greater difficulty in carrying out daily tasks and home assistance is necessary.

In the fourth stage, mobility is

The figures

150.000 Spanish people suffer from this disease.

95% of people diagnosed are over 60 years old.

50-60 years is the most frequent age of people who have Parkinson's

7 millions million people suffer from it in the world.



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even more reduced, so the patient may require a walker or the company of a person. At this stage, the person suffering from Parkinson's disease should not live alone.

Finally, the fifth stage is the most advanced of all and is where symptoms such as extreme stiffness or dementia appear. In this phase, a caregiver is required continuously to keep the affected patient company.

TIPS FOR LIVING TOGETHER// Living with a person with Parkinson's is not always easy.

First of all, it is recommended to follow the doctor's instructions and accompany the patient to the speech therapist, psychologist or physiotherapist. It is also important to encourage guided and accompanied movement of the sick person. Another factor to consider is to give the patient conversation and prevent him from feeling lonely.

It is advisable to promote the autonomy of the patient with Parkinson's and motivate him to do daily tasks such as washing his hands and face, dressing or eating without help. These are acts that help them feel fulfilled. ≡

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