

**Louisiana Pharmacists Association**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Parkinson's Disease**

Nearly 1 million people in the United States suffer from Parkinson's disease and 50,000-60,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Complications associated with Parkinson's disease, pneumonia, falling-related injuries, and choking, rank among the leading causes of death in the United States. Parkinson's disease is more common in people over the age of 60 but individuals as young as 18 have been diagnosed. (3,4)

Parkinson's disease is a chronic, progressive brain disorder. The malfunction and death of dopamine-producing cells in the substantia of the brain is the cause of Parkinson's disease. (3,4,5) Dopamine is a chemical neurotransmitter that relays messages to the portion of the brain that controls movement and coordination. (2) Once 60 to 80% of the dopamine-producing cells in the brain are damaged, the symptoms of Parkinson's disease appear. The symptoms of Parkinson's disease include trembling or shaking of the hands, arms, legs, slowness of movement, stiffness, impaired balance and decreased coordination. (3,4,5)

Currently there is no cure; however, there are medicines available to treat the symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease. Carbidopa/levodopa (Sinemet® and others) is a potent treatment for reducing symptoms. It is one of the oldest treatments available with a long history of success. Some patients find they cannot however tolerate the side effects such as sleepiness, low blood pressure on standing. Less commonly it can also cause muscle contractions, impulse control problems and does modestly increase the risk of developing melanoma. Over time in many patients the benefits of this treatment can wane. This has led some clinicians to prefer starting treatment with other medications.

Because of the limits associated with carbidopa/levodopa, the monoamine oxidase B (MAO-B) inhibitors selegiline (Eldepryl®) and Rasagiline (Azilect®), and catechol-O-methyltransferase (COMT) inhibitors entacapone (Comtan®) and tolcapone (Tasmar®) have become much more common choices for treatment naïve patients.(5) These drugs can also modestly lower blood pressure and may require the patient to decrease the amounts of cured meats and cheeses, beers and other alcohols in the diet due to brain hemorrhage, stroke, or sudden spikes in blood pressure that can occur when these drugs and foods are taken in combination. The patient's pharmacist should be consulted about exactly which foods are or are not included on this list.(1,2,3)

In most patients a combination of other treatments consisting of dopamine agonists pramipexole (Mirapex), ropinirole (Requip), rotigotine (Neupro®), and apomorphine (Apokyn), anticholinergics trihexyphenidyl (Artane®) and benztropin mesylate (Cogentin®), and rasagiline (Azilect®), and COMT inhibitors entacapone (Comtan®) and tolcapone (Tasmar®).(5) The occurrence and severity of the symptoms vary for each patient therefore the choice of therapy is specific to each patient.(2,3)

Although a treatable illness, Parkinson's disease is life-changing. In addition to the medications that help with motor functioning, other medications can be prescribed to help with behavioral symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease such as agitation, depression, and anxiety. Joining support groups can also be beneficial for the individual and the caregiver for an individual with Parkinson's disease.(4) Individuals with Parkinson's disease should talk to their pharmacist to better manage their symptoms and continue to adhere to their medication therapy in order to improve quality of life.

#### Resources:

1. Jankovic, Joseph, and L Aguilar. "Abstract." National Center for Biotechnology Information. U.S. National Library of Medicine, 6 Jan. 1927. Web. 23 Sept. 2014. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2536542/>>.
2. Katzung, Bertram G., Susan B. Masters, and Anthony J. Trevor. "Pharmacologic Management of Parkinsonism & Other Movement Disorders." *Basic & Clinical Pharmacology*. 12th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Medical ;, 2012. 483-500. Print.
3. "Parkinson's Disease: Hope Through Research.": National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Sept. 2014.

<[http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/parkinsons\\_disease/detail\\_parkinsons\\_disease.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/parkinsons_disease/detail_parkinsons_disease.htm)>.

4. "PD 101." National Parkinson Foundation. Web. 10 Sept. 2014.

<<http://www.parkinson.org/Parkinson-s-Disease/PD-101>>.

5. "Prescription Medications." Parkinson's Disease Foundation (PDF). Web. 10 Sept.

2014. <[http://www.pdf.org/parkinson\\_prescription\\_meds](http://www.pdf.org/parkinson_prescription_meds)>.

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**The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at [www.louisianapharmacists.com](http://www.louisianapharmacists.com).**

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