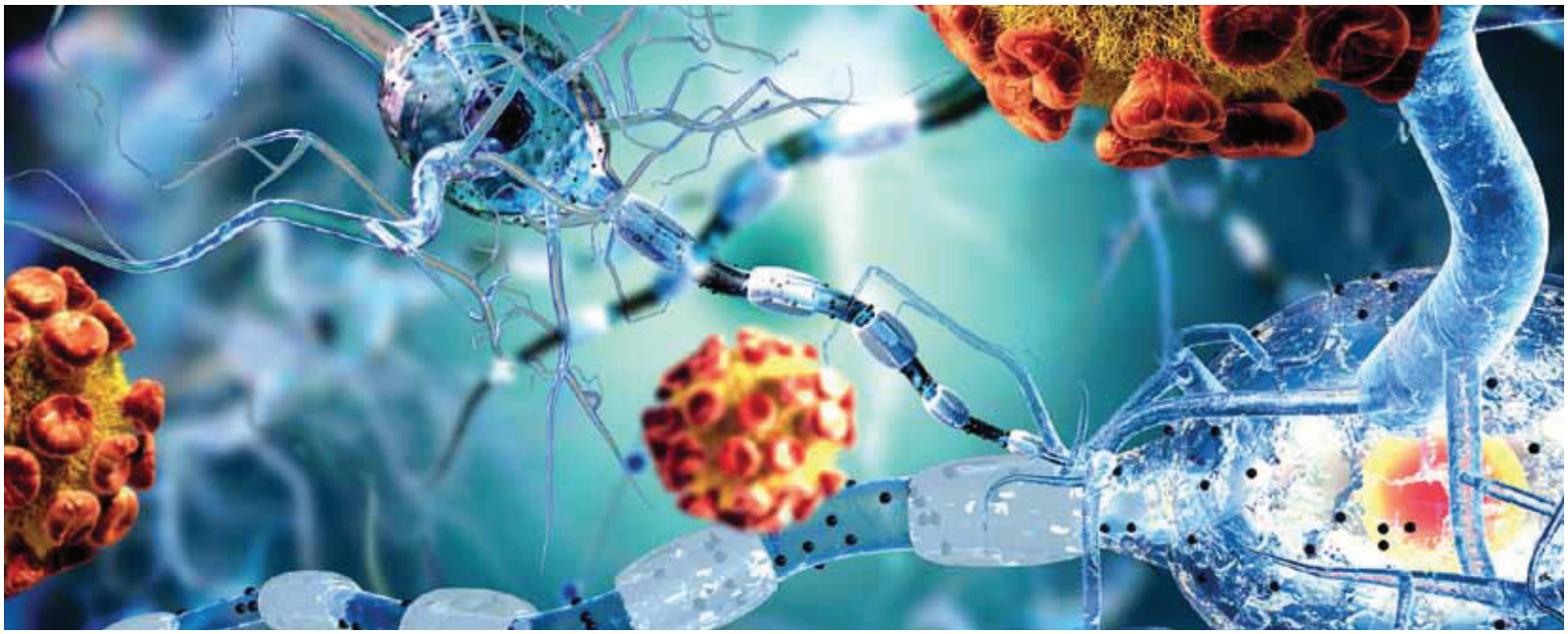


Managing Parkinson's Disease

TrueNorth Health finds success in amino acid-based therapy

by Csilla Veress, N.D., L.Ac

Parkinson's disease is a progressive and debilitating neurological disorder that affects one million Americans and more than four million people worldwide. It is not known exactly what causes Parkinson's disease (PD) and it is without a cure.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, PD affects more men than women (by 50%), and is found more often in older people (60 years old on average, although "early onset" can occur before age 50). Total risk is 2 to 5% unless a family member has a known gene for the disease.

Knowing exactly how many cases of PD exist is difficult (the estimate is about 50,000 a year in the U.S.) since in the early stages many people think that their symptoms reflect normal aging, so they don't consult their doctors. Other health conditions may also present symptoms similar to PD (there is no definitive test to find out if someone has the disease).

Tremors in the arms or legs are considered the hallmark of Parkinson's, though the disease inevitably progresses. As motor control diminishes, simple tasks like writing and walking are typically the first to go. Patients eventually become wheelchair-bound and suffer from dementia. But perhaps most disturbing is that Parkinson's disease responds poorly to conventional therapy.

"Parkinson's disease responds poorly to conventional therapy."

Current Treatment

The current treatment to manage PD hails from the understanding that Parkinson's disease is associated with a relative deficiency of dopamine. A versatile amino acid and neurotransmitter, dopamine plays many important roles in the body, including communication between cells. Without adequate dopamine, cells fail to signal effectively and the devastating effects of Parkinson's ensue.

Simply administering dopamine offers no benefit because it cannot cross the blood-brain barrier (BBB), a semi-permeable membrane that is composed of tightly fitted endothelial cells. The membrane functions to maintain a constant environment for the brain. Its primary function is to protect the brain from foreign substances, and also neurotransmitters and hormones in the rest of the body that could injure the brain. But modern medicine has found a way over this hurdle.

Treatment of Parkinson's disease typically begins with a prescription for L-dopa (a metabolite of L-tyrosine and the precursor of dopamine). Once L-dopa enters the brain, it converts into dopamine and this offers some relief. However, a relevant side effect is extreme nausea, which makes higher, more effective dosages problematic. Higher dosages are necessary because L-dopa has a high affinity to convert to dopamine in peripheral tissue before reaching the BBB, which doesn't allow as much time to reach its target in the brain.

To remedy the nausea and allow more L-dopa to cross the BBB, carbidopa and benserazide (these two substances are L-aromatic amino acid decarboxylase [AAAD] inhibitors. They prevent the conversion of L-dopa to dopamine in the peripheral tissues so that more L-dopa can cross the

BBB). But with the addition of these medications, side effects can still exist, including, leg pain, gait abnormalities, numbness, peripheral neuropathy, flushing, urinary retention, muscle twitching, malaise, hot flashes, agranulocytosis, myocardial infarction, gastrointestinal bleeding, fatigue, and hypokalemia.

Another Option

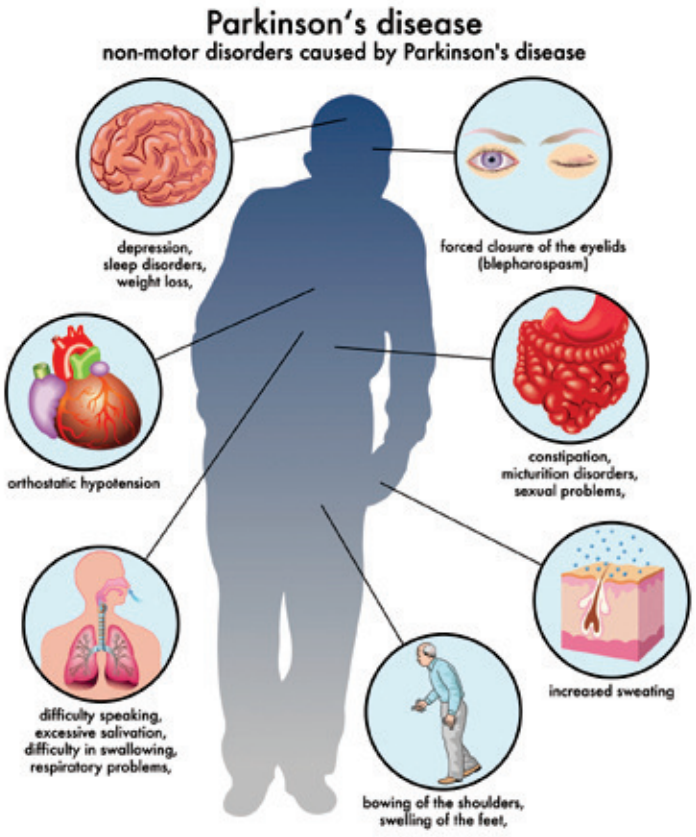
Because there are so many side effects associated with the current treatment, alternative treatment methods have developed, most notably, amino acid-based neurotransmitter therapy. Amino acids are the building blocks to neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters are chemical messengers that allow information to be processed between neurons, which are the cells of the nervous system. The amino acids are administered in the form of supplements.

Recognizing the body's integrative nature, and seeking to least disturb its balance, the medical community has made tremendous progress by orally administering amino acids to Parkinson's patients. Through decades of experimentation, scientists have developed increasingly effective protocols to optimize biochemistry and improve quality of life while mitigating symptoms and side effects. Because the same amino acids are required for a variety of pathways, amino acid-based neurotransmitter therapy has also been shown to help patients with other conditions. These include Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, restless leg syndrome, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, insomnia, dementia, chronic pain, and migraines.

Amino acid therapy can work wonders, but alone, it is not enough. Taking a holistic approach to wellness, the doctors at TrueNorth Health Center begin treatment by helping Parkinson's patients build a solid foundation of health. We promote a whole, exclusively plant food diet that is free of added salt, oil, and sugar. We also encourage appropriate exercise and adequate sleep, and teach our patients how to better manage stress.

This integrative approach has proven effective at slowing the progression of Parkinson's, but it is not enough to control the symptoms entirely, which is why neurotransmitter therapy is a necessary addition to our treatment protocols. TrueNorth staff doctor Dr. Peter Sultana, M.D. and I (Dr. Csilla Veress, N.D., Lac) are highly trained, with years of experience in the administration of neurotransmitter therapy. We have trained under Dr. Marty Hinz, M.D., the pioneer of this therapy, and I have completed advanced comprehensive proficiency coursework to fine-tune its application.

To learn more about whether neurotransmitter therapy may be appropriate for you, call 707-586-5555. Published research demonstrating the benefits of neurotransmitter therapy is available upon request.



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Csilla Veress, N.D., L.Ac is a Naturopathic doctor and Licensed Acupuncturist at TrueNorth Health Center in Santa Rosa, California. She received her Master's in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, and her Doctorate in Naturopathic medicine from Bastyr University. While in medical school, Dr. Veress completed a two-year internship in cancer research at Bastyr Integrative Oncology Research Center. She has completed additional training in Classical Homeopathy at the New England School of Homeopathy and advanced comprehensive neurotransmitter training at/from Institute of Neurotransmitter Science. Dr. Veress is passionate about preventative care, and emphasizes nutrition-based medicine. She implements natural hygiene and a Naturopathic medical approach, supporting patients to heal their bodies through lifestyle, food, and water fasting.