Marijuana and Parkinson's Disease

By Ying Liu, MD & Maureen Leehey, MD

Parkinson’s disease (PD) is a progressive disorder that can cause tremor, stiffness, slow movement, anxiety, dementia, depression, psychosis, fatigue, insomnia, urinary problems and constipation. Current therapies are helpful but often do not control the symptoms adequately. Since marijuana has recently become legal and readily available in Colorado, persons with PD have been trying it. Patients have heard from the internet, support groups, and other sources that marijuana is helpful. Most are using marijuana without the supervision or even knowledge of their neurologist. In a survey conducted in the spring of 2014, in our clinic, about 5% of 207 PD patients, average age 69, reported using marijuana. In the last 6 months, during clinic visits, 30% of PD patients at University of Colorado Movement Disorders Center have asked doctors about marijuana usage. Using marijuana is risky because it may worsen current symptoms such as cognitive, psychiatric and motor problems, including falling. The delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) component of marijuana is especially likely to cause the problems. Studies on safety and efficacy of marijuana in PD are lacking.

Cannabis is composed of many cannabinoid compounds and other substances. Cannabidiol (CBD) is a cannabinoid that is present to a lesser extent in street marijuana, and limits THC’s psychoactive effect. CBD acts in some experimental models to reduce inflammation, seizures, oxidative stress, nausea, anxiety and psychosis and therefore has potential beneficial medical uses. Human trials report CBD decreases anxiety and causes sedation in healthy individuals, decreases psychotic symptoms in schizophrenia and PD, and improves motor and non-motor symptoms and alleviated levodopa-induced dyskinesia in PD. The ratio of THC to CBD plays a role in the preparation’s therapeutic outcome: strains of cannabis with higher concentrations of CBD did not produce short-term memory impairment vs. strains with similar concentrations of THC, but lower concentrations of CBD.

Given CBD’s possible neuroprotective and beneficial effects and the general lack of information in regards to PD, research is needed. Presently, persons with PD taking marijuana are taking a large variety of types and dosages of marijuana. Thus studies need to focus on the effects of specific types and doses of marijuana. Our center has been awarded funding by the state of Colorado to study the effects of a CBD in PD.

If you would like further information, call 303-724-8288 or email Ying.3.Liu@ucdenver.edu
The University of Colorado Advanced Therapeutics in Movement Disorders (ATMD) Program

Progressive neurological diseases can be challenging to treat, especially in the advanced stages of disease. Fortunately, there has been and continues to be great advancements in treatments including new medications, pharmaceutical delivery systems and surgical options. Given the complex nature and the numerous treatment options for movement disorders, it is now essential to have a comprehensive program addressing the needs of our patients. The Movement Disorder Center at the University of Colorado is pleased to introduce our Advanced Therapeutics in Movement Disorders (ATMD) program.

The goals of the program are to:
- Ensure accurate diagnosis
- Educate the community about the options in management of advanced movement disorders
- Provide patients with the latest treatment options
- Ensure the “whole person” is treated including evaluating quality of life issues through palliative care
- Develop treatments for advanced movement disorders through research
- Work with our community clinicians in providing treatment options for our mutual patients

The ATMD program is taking direct referrals and we look forward to working with our community in providing the best and most advanced care for our patients.

For an appointment, call 720-848-2080.

The CU Movement Disorders Center (UCMDC) Interdisciplinary Clinic for Parkinson’s Disease (PD)

The Interdisciplinary Clinic at the MDC was specifically designed for patients with PD. This program involves an annual, 2-hour visit, during which patients get a standardized set of evaluations by physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and a movement disorder neurologist. This program consolidates these into one convenient visit, and allows both providers and patients to more accurately track progression, collect data, and most importantly, provide comprehensive care to our patients.

For more information, contact Elana Russell, NP or Jessica Barr, PA 720-848-2080.

Meet the New Staff: Dr. Drew Kern

Dr. Drew S. Kern is a board-certified neurologist subspecializing in Movement Disorders. Dr. Kern moved to Colorado to complete his undergraduate and graduate education at the University of Colorado Boulder. He then attended medical school at the University of Vermont. During medical school, he completed a two-year translational research fellowship under the mentorship of Dr. John Sladek Jr., at the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus.

Subsequently, he completed his internship and neurology residency at the University of Colorado Denver, followed by a two-year movement disorders fellowship under the direction of Dr. A. E. Lang at the University of Toronto. He joined the University of Colorado Neurology faculty in August 2015.

Dr. Kern is incredibly honored and privileged to be part of the Neurology Department, Movement Disorders Center (MDC). He looks forward to being an active member of the team continuing to provide the highest quality patient care and advancing clinical research.

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http://subscribe.ucdenvermovement.org

GET INVOLVED!
The research being conducted by the Movement Disorders Center (MDC) team at CU Anschutz Medical Campus is essential to developing tomorrow’s treatments and care. These advances hold promise to vastly improve the lives of patients and families. If you would like to learn more about research at the MDC, or how you can help speed these efforts, contact Carrie Radant Flynn at Carrie.Radant@ucdenver.edu or call 303-724-9146.

PD Connect

Have you been recently diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease (PD)? You are not alone. Learn more about how our PD Connect program can help, contact Karen Talcott. 303-759-5904 | karet2@aol.com
Palliative care is an approach to the care of patients with serious illnesses and their family members that focuses on relieving suffering through the management of medical symptoms, psychosocial issues and spiritual wellbeing. Although traditionally associated with cancer and end-of-life care (e.g. hospice), palliative care is now recognized to be helpful for other illnesses and at any point along one’s illness, including the time of diagnosis. Sometimes the term “supportive care” is used to emphasize the goal of supporting patients and families. Palliative care may be provided by community organizations, individual physicians, or specialized teams depending on the needs of the patient and their caregivers or family.

The University of Colorado Hospital Neurology Palliative and Supportive Care Clinic began in 2013 and was one of the first clinics in the United States to provide team-based supportive care to patients with movement disorders and other neurologic illnesses. We started this clinic in recognition of the many gaps in care and challenges facing our patients and their caregivers. Our primary team includes a neurologist, social worker, nurse and chaplain, and we also work with other services (e.g. psychologist, physical therapy, acupuncturist) depending on peoples’ needs.

Issues we address include:
- Difficult to treat non-motor symptoms (e.g. dementia, fatigue, pain),
- Resources and support for caregivers,
- Assistance with planning for the future.
- Assistance with transitions in level of care (e.g. move to nursing home, needing more help at home),
- Psychological issues (e.g. grief, anger, guilt), and
- Spiritual counseling.

Our Center is one of the world’s leaders in Palliative Care for Movement Disorders and we hosted the first international conference on Palliative Care and Parkinson’s Disease (PD) in October 2015 to bring together experts to advance this field. We are also the lead site for the first randomized clinical trial of palliative care for PD and are currently seeking PD patients and caregivers struggling with any of the issues listed above to enroll in this trial. If you are interested, please contact Etta Abaca at etta.abaca@ucdenver.edu or call 303-724-8287.

Recent Advances in Parkinson’s Disease and Essential Tremor

On July 25, 2015, the Movement Disorders team traveled to Glenwood Springs to educate Parkinson’s disease and Essential Tremor patients about the recent advancements in treatment options. The nearly 150 attendees included patients, family members, and caregivers. They heard lectures from our own Drs. Olga Klepitskaya, Maureen Leehey, Lauren Seeberger and Heather Baer. Dr. Seth Kareus of St. Mary’s Hospital also donated his time to present on new therapies. Renee Peter, DPT and Jill Newcombe MA, CCC-SLP held interactive breaks featuring Physical and Speech Therapy techniques. The team looks forward to hosting more educational events throughout Colorado in the future.

To the Future and Back II PD Symposium

On Saturday, September 26, 2015 the Movement Disorders Center hosted “To The Future and Back II” PD event, at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Conference attendance was at-capacity with nearly 300 patients, family and caregivers attending the day-long function. Drs. Maureen Leehey, Brian Berman, Olga Klepitskaya, Benzi Kluger and Margaret Schenkman, presented workshops on medication management, surgical treatments, non-motor symptoms, and exercise, alongside guest speaker Dr. Samantha Hutten of the Michael J. Fox Foundation who spoke on genetics and causes of PD. With such strong support and turn-out, the MDC looks forward to hosting future community education events annually. Event videos and presentations can be viewed on the MDC website, ucdenvermovement.org, under the “Resources” tab.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We are looking for the following types of patients interested in research</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patients with Parkinson’s disease interested in a brain imaging study</td>
<td>Erika Shelton 303-724-5865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients with cervical dystonia interested in a brain imaging study</td>
<td>Erika Shelton 303-724-5865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients with any form of dystonia interested in a genetics study</td>
<td>Erika Shelton 303-724-5865</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with Parkinson’s disease with palliative care needs</td>
<td>Etta Abaca 720-848-6536</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with Parkinson’s disease and not on medications (or only on monoamine oxidase-B inhibitors)</td>
<td>Kalie Petefish 303-724-8305</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with Huntington disease</td>
<td>Mary Cook 303-724-7968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with Parkinson’s disease and interested in a study on fatigue and balance</td>
<td>Jean Berliner 303-724-7888</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with orthostatic hypotension (sudden decrease in blood pressure)</td>
<td>Kalie Petefish 303-724-8305</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with Parkinson’s disease interested in a rhythm study</td>
<td>Christine Martin 303-724-8885</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with Parkinson’s disease and problems with thinking or memory</td>
<td>Christine Martin 303-724-8885</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with drooling from any cause</td>
<td>Kalie Petefish 303-724-8305</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with recently diagnosed, early stage Parkinson’s disease</td>
<td>Kalie Petefish 303-724-8305</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patients with Parkinson’s disease and have medications wearing off (medication pump study)</td>
<td>Kalie Petefish 303-724-8305</td>
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**Upcoming Events**

14th Annual Vitality Walk - June 5
Blepharospasm Essential Research Foundation Patient Symposium - August 6
4th Annual Colorado Courage Run - August 27
E3 - Educate, Empower, Energize Conference - September 10
4th World Parkinson Congress September 20-23, Portland, Oregon
CU Movement Disorders Center 3rd Annual PD Symposium - October 1

**Ongoing Classes**

**Mindful Movement for Parkinson’s**
Denver Class: Monthly on Sundays, 2:00-4:30 pm
Boulder B-A-L-A-N-C-E Class:
Contact Matthew Zepelin for details 303-895-5278 | Matthew.Zepelin@gmail.com
www.recovermobility.com/for-parkinsons-disease

**Reconnect with Your Body Dance Class**
Wednesdays, 2:30-3:45 at Apex Community Center
www.ArtAsAction.org | Sarah@artasaction.org | 720-938-6069

**PWR! Moves or PWR! Circuit, PD Exercise Classes**
Wednesdays & Fridays, 1:15 pm
Anschutz Health and Wellness Center 720-848-2000

Find these resources and more online!
Visit ucdenvermovement.org and click on the “Resources” tab.

University of Colorado Movement Disorders Center
303-724-8655
movement@ucdenver.edu
ucdenvermovement.org