

Choosing the therapy which is right for you

This information will help you to make decisions about therapies that are right for your individual needs.

Introduction

Everyone living with Parkinson's experiences different symptoms and will require different treatments. The range of treatment choices to help manage Parkinson's can be overwhelming.

Working with your treating doctors and healthcare professionals will help identify the best treatment for your individual needs.

There are many conventional medical therapies available to treat the symptoms of Parkinson's. Prescribed medications and surgical treatments have been subject to rigorous clinical trials providing a scientific evidence base identifying both benefits and possible side effects.

Medicines and medical devices are regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). The doctors that prescribe are regulated by the Australian Health Care Practitioner Regulatory Authority (AHPRA).

Evidence based practice

Conventional medical, nursing and allied health approaches are based on evidence-based practice. This approach includes the conscientious, explicit, judicious and reasonable use of modern, best scientific evidence in

guiding therapy recommendations for the care of individual patients.

High quality care is evidence-based, and includes consideration of the best available research information, the clinician's experience and your own preferences and values.

For any treatment or therapy, the clinician should be able to clearly explain how strong the scientific evidence is, what has been found, and how they expect a treatment may work for you and any side effects or long-term consequences associated with the treatment.

The evidence-based approach encourages decisions about treatments are shared between you and your treating healthcare professional.

Other therapies; complimentary, integrated or alternative therapies

There are many therapies that often do not have adequate scientific evidence. These are often identified as complementary, integrated or alternative therapies.

These therapies are often holistic and may increase your sense of wellbeing and for some may feel beneficial. However, some of these therapies can interact with your treatments and many have very limited, weak, or no scientific evidence to support them.

These treatment choices may be based on traditions or beliefs and not have been tested scientifically.

Long term effects are not known as the treatment or therapy has often not been subject

to a rigorous clinical trial nor the treatment widely used for the adverse effects known or reported. You should always let your treating Neurologist and General Practitioner know about what treatment you are engaging with.

Complimentary or integrated therapies: These therapies are usually used as well as or alongside medical or allied healthcare treatment. There are a wide range of therapies which may be considered as complimentary or integrated and include acupuncture, reflexology, Bowen therapy or massage.

Alternative therapies: These therapies are used in place of or may replace conventional medical and allied healthcare therapies. A high degree of caution should be used when considering alternative therapies.

Deciding about additional therapy

Detective Work: Seeking out doctors and healthcare professionals who have expertise in managing Parkinson's, PSP, MSA and CBS will help you to identify the best therapy for your individual needs.

As a rule, Doctors and healthcare professionals will only ever offer treatment choices which have a sound evidence base. As evidence-based practitioners, they will be able to explain how the evidence and proposed treatment may apply to you.

If you are considering a complimentary or alternative therapies, it is important to ask some key questions:

- What scientific evidence suggests this therapy will assist my symptoms?
- Is the evidence based on clinical trials?
- How much will this cost?

- When will I see a benefit and how long will this last?
- Are the long-term effects of the therapy known?
- Are these any side effects of this therapy?
- Can I use these therapies alongside those prescribed by my Neurologist/physician/ General Practitioner?

Costs and payment

When you are exploring other types of therapy, either seeing a practitioner or taking a supplement, be aware it may not be covered by Medicare, Private Health insurance, or other funding programs such as My Aged Care or the National Disability Insurance Scheme or the Pharmaceutical benefits scheme (PBS) which subsidises the cost of medication. It is important to remember these costs add up over time.

You should be aware that some therapies may make claims that are false or misleading and may have unreasonable costs associated with them.

Sometimes they require a device or piece of equipment that is promoted as being helpful or as a treatment. Equipment may be very expensive and funding programs and insurances will not provide support if there is an absent of, or minimal evidence to support its use, or it's not registered for this specific use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Attempting to make your own device/s can be potentially dangerous.

Changing your therapy

Sometimes a therapist may suggest that you stop or alter your treatments. It is strongly recommended that you do not do this. Always discuss suggested changes with your treating GP or Neurologist.

Changes to medication need to be supervised and done with significant care to avoid worsening symptoms and in some cases symptoms of drug withdrawal.

Managing therapies and cautions

If you want to pursue a therapy that may not have a substantial evidence base, being aware of your symptoms and any changes which you are experiencing is important.

You need to report any changes to your condition to your treating Neurologist or GP.

Complimentary or integrated and alternative therapies are not regulated, adverse events from people using them may not have been reported

to bodies such as the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

If you are pursuing a therapy, it is essential to check that any substances you are adding to your treatments do not interact or cause an adverse reaction with prescribed treatments.

Always let your treating doctor know about the therapies you are using.

Summary

There has only been limited research on use of complimentary, integrated and alternative therapies and there are very few guidelines published on managing these therapies alongside evidence-based Parkinson's treatments.

Many people feel that they these therapies provide some benefit. Doing some detective work will help you work out what is right for you.

Fight Parkinson's is a leading source of specialised health information and advice services. Through research, education and support, we strive to improve the lives of people living with Parkinson's, PSP, MSA and CBS.

Any medial information provided is for general information purposes only. You should always talk to your treating doctor and qualified healthcare providers for personal medical and health-related instructions.

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