

Health Bulletin

Brain Pacemaker Offers New Hope For Parkinson's Patients

(NAPSA)—More than one million Americans suffer from the devastating effects of Parkinson's disease, a journey in which the patient gradually loses control over body movements. Sometimes the degeneration takes many years, sometimes just a few.

Caused by the loss of cells responsible for creating dopamine in a region of the brain called the substantia nigra, Parkinson's is characterized by stiffness of the limbs and joints, slowness of movement, and involuntary shaking. Eventually, everyday tasks may become so difficult that venturing outside the home is nearly impossible.

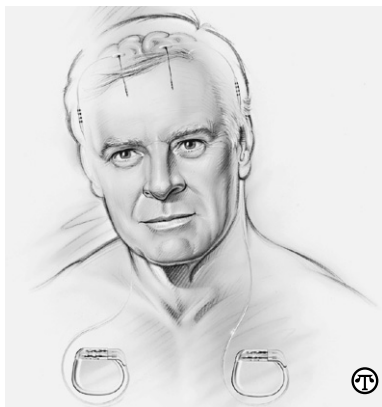
Introduced in the late 1960s, levodopa has been the standard drug therapy for Parkinson's disease. While the drug can significantly improve mobility, its effectiveness can decrease over time until side effects sometimes become worse than the disease itself.

Fortunately, collaboration between medical technology companies and pioneering physicians is resulting in new treatments with unprecedented results.

New Therapies

One new approach is the Activa® System from Medtronic. Often referred to as a "brain pacemaker," the Activa System includes two surgically implanted medical devices to deliver electrical stimulation to areas on each side of the brain. The stimulation blocks signals that cause disabling motor symptoms.

The FDA approved Activa Parkinson's Control Therapy earlier this year. It is intended as a complementary treatment for patients in the advanced stages of



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the disease who still respond to the drug levodopa but whose symptoms are not adequately controlled by medication.

Emilio Mercado's Experience

For almost 20 years, Emilio Mercado, 69, of San Francisco watched as symptoms of Parkinson's disease including walking difficulties, freezing episodes and tremors, gradually robbed him of important aspects of his photography career.

While his Parkinson's symptoms never interfered with his ability to snap a picture, over time Emilio grew less able to carry equipment, set up and move lights, stand for long periods or move in the confines of his darkroom.

"I worried about him freezing, or falling," remembers Emilio's caregiver, Linda. "I would worry that he might get stuck in the

middle of the trolley tracks at the end of our street. Sometimes he would be cooking on the stove and couldn't get back from the darkroom in time to turn the stove off."

After talking with his neurologist and the neurosurgeon who would perform the surgical implant, Emilio was convinced that Activa Therapy was right for him. Linda was initially frightened by the prospect of brain surgery and met with the neurosurgeon soon after Emilio. Together, they weighed the surgical risks and chances of adverse reactions against the benefits that Emilio might enjoy. They decided to go forward with the surgery.

Linda recalls the moment she knew the procedure had been a success. "We were walking up a hill and I saw Emilio burst into a trot ahead of me and start running. When I caught up to him, I saw the smile on his face. It was absolutely beautiful."

Emilio says he now gets the maximum benefit from his medications for the maximum amount of time and he now accepts almost all photography opportunities that come his way. "Everyone needs something to look forward to in life," he says. "I tell people to try Activa® Therapy, because it can have a very positive effect on your life."

Results of Activa Therapy vary from patient to patient. Not every response is the same and Activa is not for everyone.

For more information on the Activa Parkinson's Control System, talk with a neurologist who specializes in treatment of Parkinson's disease or call Medtronic at 1-800-664-5111 extension 1070.