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New Developments in Deep Brain Stimulation: Achieving a Better Quality of Life



Kay Mixson-Jenkins.

ay Mixson-Jenkins' life was turned upside down when she was told she had Parkinson's disease.

Suffering from severe dyskinesias, she couldn't enjoy simple activities with her family. But after undergoing deep brain stimulation (DBS) surgery at the University of Florida in Gainesville, an NPF Center of Excellence, her life improved dramatically. "Now I can cut my own food, dress myself and dance with my husband," she said. "I have a future to look forward to and that is wonderful."

While DBS has yielded life-changing results for Mixson-Jenkins and others whose medications no longer adequately control symptoms, specialists continue to pursue ways to make the therapy easier, safer and more effective. "Parkinson's disease affects the brain in very complex ways and we have only so far scratched the surface of the best techniques and approaches for using stimulation to treat this disease," said Michael Okun, MD, NPF's National Medical Director.

In DBS surgery, a neurosurgeon and interdisciplinary team implants one or alternatively two leads (wires) deep in the brain and wires them to a pacemaker-like device implanted below the collarbone. Electrodes near the tip of each lead emit electrical pulses, regulating the chaotic brain cell activity that causes motor symptoms. At present, DBS is typically used to treat individuals who are in the advanced stages of the disease. One of the challenges facing people with Parkinson's is recognizing the most beneficial time to have this therapy.

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APRIL IS PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH



NPF Grant Funding

"NPF has launched a new grant cycle with the goal of developing the next generation of leaders..."

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Using Technology to Manage PD

"We are a family that lives with Parkinson's disease every day, and we all use technology to connect in different ways."

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Moving Day® Spreads Across the Country

Moving Day®, a walk for Parkinson's, is now in twenty-four markets across the United States.

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New Developments in Deep Brain Stimulation: Achieving a Better Quality of Life

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"The right time for DBS is different for individual patients," said David Charles, MD, Chief Medical Officer of the Vanderbilt Neuroscience Institute, and Director of the Movement Disorders Clinic at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, an NPF Center of Excellence. "There is an optimal time that DBS can be particularly helpful. It's a combination of age and how long a person has had Parkinson's disease."

One way to take advantage of this therapeutic window is to start learning about DBS as soon as you experience levodopa-associated dvskinesias. Dr. Charles recommends. Once you reach the point where your symptoms no longer have any response to medications, the therapeutic window has probably closed and the therapy won't be very beneficial.

Currently, researchers are studying the benefits of DBS on patients in earlier stages of the disease. Last month, Dr. Charles and the team at Vanderbilt received approval from the FDA to conduct a multicenter study to test the safety and tolerability of DBS in early stage Parkinson's disease. "The hypothesis is that DBS applied early in the course of Parkinson's will slow the progression of disability." he said. That would be a major breakthrough.

GOOD CANDIDATES FOR DBS

- Still respond to levodopa with some good time throughout the day.
- ♠ Experience Parkinson's symptoms that interfere with daily activities, including off periods with bradykinesia, rigidity or tremor; unpredictable on-off phenomena; motor fluctuations; bothersome dyskinesias; and tremor that is not completely responsive to medication.
- Do not have significant depression or dementia.
- Have realistic expectations.

To learn more about DBS, visit www.parkinson.org/dbs.

Download a free copy of NPF's newly revised DBS publication at www.parkinson.org/books.

Letter from the President

his past year has been marked by the launch of even more NPF programs for people living with Parkinson's and their families. We truly believe that all people deserve access to expert Parkinson's care and information no matter who they are, where they live or how much money they have.

It is a lifelong commitment to the underserved that has been a strong tenet of our retiring Chairman of the Board, Dr. Bernard Fogel. For six years, Dr. Fogel led the Board as a strong advocate of our mission to focus on improving the lives of patients today. His passion to help—and help mightily—stemmed from seeing his own father struggle with the disease for decades.



John Kozyak, Joyce Oberdorf and Bernard Fogel, MD.

Now he passes the Chairman's baton to John Kozyak. Both John's mother and father have Parkinson's and he has seen firsthand the difference that education and support can make in a person's ability to live a better life now and he is strongly committed to the cause. A prominent attorney with a national profile, John, too, has a long history of serving the underserved.

As president and CEO, it has been my honor to work sideby-side with wonderful leaders such as Dr. Bernard Fogel and John Kozyak. Together, on behalf of the million Americans with Parkinson's and their families, we are committed to doing whatever it takes to beat Parkinson's.

Thanks for your support,

Joyce Oberdorf

President and CEO