

# **PEMRIG**

## **PARKINSON'S EAST MIDLANDS RESEARCH INTEREST GROUP**

### **Newsletter – FEBRUARY 2024**

Hello to all East Midlands' people with Parkinson's, carers, families, health professionals and others reading this February 2024 PEMRIG newsletter. Please consult the PEMRIG website ([click here](#)) for details of past laboratory visits and research seminars. PEMRIG is one of twelve groups round the UK whose aim is to interest People with Parkinson's and their carers in the exciting Parkinson's research going on in the UK and all round the world.

If you missed PEMRIG's very successful 2023 online research meeting on **'The microbiome-gut-brain axis and probiotics in Parkinson's'** you can listen to it here: [recording link](#).

### **WHAT'S NEXT FROM PEMRIG?**

**March 11<sup>th</sup>, 7.00 – 8.30pm: an evening talk online - 'Navigating Parkinson's: Update, Imaging, and Digital Tools'.**

*Summary: Embark on a journey with "Navigating Parkinson's," a special presentation crafted for patients and their families. Gain an update on advancements in Parkinson's research and potential breakthroughs in treatment options or disease management. Explore the world of advanced imaging techniques, helping us visualize and track changes of the brain in Parkinson's. Plus, discover the latest in digital tools designed to monitor and enhance the well-being of those affected by PD. Join us for an informative and supportive session, where we navigate through the complexities of Parkinson's together.*

Register for this evening talk [here](#).

**April 3<sup>rd</sup> 11.00am - 1.00pm. Online zoom visit to Dr Charmaine Lang's laboratory in Oxford to hear about her Parkinson's research work.**

Register for this lab visit at [this link](#).

*Dr Lang describes her research work: Parkinson's research is centralised on the idea of finding ways to support dopamine neurons and to prevent their loss. While much research is focused on dopamine neurons themselves, it is important to note that they do not exist alone in the human brain and receive and require many signals and molecules for support and function from other cell types, most importantly astrocytes. Therefore, the focus of my research is on understanding whether dopamine neuron loss in Parkinson's is due to a lack of support by astrocytes and to find ways in which we can boost this support to promote dopamine neuron survival.*

*Modelling the complexity of the human brain for Parkinson's research is difficult. However, a recent technology allows us to take skin cells from Parkinson's patients and reprogramme these skin cells into induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs). These iPSCs can be turned into any cell type in the body and we have developed protocols to produce iPSC-derived dopamine neurons and astrocytes for research. My work uses these iPSC-derived dopamine neurons and astrocytes to study communication between these two cell types, as well as astrocyte support of dopamine neurons in Parkinson's.*

*Additionally, my work involves developing drug therapy avenues to boost either astrocyte support of dopamine neurons or dopamine neuron function in Parkinson's.*

## **September 7<sup>th</sup>: 10.00am to 4.00pm 13<sup>th</sup> Annual PEMRIG Research and Welfare meeting 'CONTINUING TO LIVE WELL WITH PARKINSON'S'.**

This is an all day Face to Face meeting (10.00am – 4.00pm) with free lunch and refreshments. The keynote speaker, Dr Simon Stott, Director of Research at the Cure Parkinson's Trust, will give a round up of current research and trials.

**Dr Lynne Barker (Sheffield Hallam) and Dr Bhanu Ramaswamy (Hallamshire Physiotherapy Ltd) have also agreed to talk at this meeting.**

This event will be held at the Conference Centre of Nottingham Trent University, on the Clifton Campus, Nottingham NG11 8NS which is readily accessible from Junction 24 of the M1. PEMRIG greatly appreciates the input of Katie Smith and her team from Parkinson's UK for helping us with this event.

The booking link for this meeting will be available in the March and subsequent PEMRIG Newsletters.

## **PARKINSON'S TALKS, RESEARCH AND TRIALS**

### **Developing a device to monitor symptoms of Parkinson's at home.**

A new opportunity to help with research has recently been announced by Parkinson's UK. Researchers at the University of Wolverhampton are developing a device to monitor movement symptoms of Parkinson's at home. They are organising workshops for people with Parkinson's, their caregivers, and healthcare professionals to help develop the device. They need up to 20 people with Parkinson's, or who care for someone with Parkinson's or are a healthcare professional working with people with Parkinson's. You must have access to a laptop and the internet if taking part online.

#### **What is involved?**

You will be asked to take part in a workshop either online by Microsoft Teams or in person in the West Midlands. The workshop will last for 2 hours including breaks and will include discussions about the device and participants' experiences. The Workshops will be video recorded and support is available for those unfamiliar with this software.

For more information, please read the [participant information sheet](#) or contact Tina Smith by email at [tina.smith@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:tina.smith@wlv.ac.uk) if you have any questions

The deadline for taking part in this research is **29 February 2024**.

**Developing talking therapy for people with Parkinson's who experience anxiety.** Researchers from University College London want to develop Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) that is tailored specifically for people with Parkinson's. ACT is a form of talking therapy that helps people to learn new ways of dealing with distressing thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. This therapy has been found to be helpful for improving wellbeing in other neurological conditions such as epilepsy.

**The researchers need 15 people with Parkinson's who experience anxiety and 15 health professionals working with people affected by Parkinson's.** For more information read either [the participant information sheet for people with Parkinson's](#) or [the participant information sheet for health professionals](#)

If you have questions about participating in this study contact Natasha Lyons by email at [Natasha.lyons.18@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:Natasha.lyons.18@ucl.ac.uk) or Suzanne Reeves by phone on 07947-036-513. The deadline for taking part in this research is **September 30th 2024**.

## **Can brain training affect how people with Parkinson's feel and think?**

Researchers at the University of Reading want to understand whether brain training can improve how information is stored and processed in the brain in people with Parkinson's, and whether this can help people with Parkinson's to better manage their emotions.

They need 100 people with Parkinson's who have access to a computer and a speaker. You will take part in a pre-training assessment before completing either 10 brain training sessions, or 10 placebo training sessions over a two-week period. Each training session will last approximately 20 minutes. You will also be asked to complete two follow-up assessments, at 1 month and 2 month intervals after the training.

**If you are interested in participating then contact Caroline Seton** by email at [c.seton@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:c.seton@pgr.reading.ac.uk) or phone her on 07367-301-282. The closing date for taking part is 4 June 2024.

## **CAN CBD (CANNABIDIOL) REDUCE SYMPTOMS OF HALLUCINATIONS AND DELUSIONS IN PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S**

Around 3 in 4 people with Parkinson's will experience symptoms of hallucinations or delusions. Hallucinations can mean that the person sees, hears or feels things that aren't there. This can be very distressing for the person and their loved ones. Current treatments for hallucinations and delusions are not very effective, or come with unwanted side effects. That's why, in 2019, Parkinson's UK announced funding for [CAN-PDP](#), an innovative clinical trial working with King's College London,. The trial aims to understand whether cannabidiol (CBD) may be useful for treating these hallucination and delusion symptoms in Parkinson's. CBD has been shown to have positive effects on other brain conditions such as epilepsy.

This trial needs 120 people with Parkinson's who are over 40 years old, who have experienced any symptoms of hallucinations or delusions for at least one month, have been taking any Parkinson's medications for at least one month, are not taking clozapine and have someone who can attend visits with them to a local study centre which for our region means the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in Sheffield or at Kingsway Hospital, Kingsway, in Derby. See below for who to contact at these study centres.

You will either receive the study treatment (CBD) or a placebo treatment (such as a sugar pill) for 12 weeks. You will be asked to attend up to 6 visits either **over the telephone, online, or at your local research centre or your home**. Each visit will last between 1 and 3 hours. During the visits, you may be asked to give blood samples, complete surveys, or physical examinations. Your expenses will be reimbursed for your participation in this research.

**For more information, please read the participant information sheet.** For Sheffield contact Anna Emery or Alex Radford by Email at [anna.emery@nhs.net](mailto:anna.emery@nhs.net) or Alex Radford [alex.radford2@nhs.net](mailto:alex.radford2@nhs.net). For Derby the contact is Caroline Cheetham. Email: [caroline.cheetham@nhs.net](mailto:caroline.cheetham@nhs.net)

The 'take part' hub on the Parkinson's UK website gives details of this trial, at [this link](#).

## **Parkinson's: diet and the gut vs the brain**

Cure Parkinson's held a very interesting webinar earlier this month on this very important topic. If you missed this discussion a recording of the webinar available to watch again can be found at [this link](#).

There were so many questions that Cure Parkinson's is putting these together with replies from the panellists in a separate FAQ folder to be issued shortly. Watch out for a link to these questions in the next PEMRIG Newsheet.

To keep up to date with all future webinars from Cure Parkinson's along with their latest research and fundraising news, sign up to their newsletter here: <https://cureparkinsons.org.uk/newsletter/>.

## **THE ROLE OF FOCUSSED ULTRASOUND IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PARKINSON'S**

Dr Raul Martinez- Fernandez gave a fascinating presentation in the latest No Silver Bullet series. His talk provoked a very informative and positive Q&A which is well worth listening to at: [this link](#).

*If you are interested in Parkinson's research and would like to be put on our mailing list, please contact John Turner, PEMRIG's Chair, by mobile at 07989747733 or email at: [pemrig.uk@gmail.com](mailto:pemrig.uk@gmail.com)*

PEMRIG Newsletter comments, queries and submissions to the Editor (Martin Rumsby) at [martin69747@gmail.com](mailto:martin69747@gmail.com)