



PEMRIG

PARKINSON'S EAST MIDLANDS RESEARCH INTEREST GROUP

Newsletter – MARCH 2024

Hello to all East Midlands' people with Parkinson's, carers, families, health professionals and others reading this March 2024 PEMRIG newsletter. Please consult the PEMRIG website (<https://pemrig.org.uk>) 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?

April 3rd 11.00am - 1.00pm. Online 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](#).

My 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.

Book this date – May 13th 2 - 4pm. Why? Because PEMRIG have an online visit via Microsoft Teams to MSD Pharma: Drug Discovery in Neuroscience to hear about their Parkinson's research. More information to come in the April newsletter.

September 7th:10.00am to 4.00pm 13th 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.

March 11th online meeting ‘Navigating Parkinson’s: Update, Imaging, and Digital Tools’. If you missed the two talks in this meeting, you can listen to a recording at [this link](#).

CURE PARKINSON’S – sign up for their March e-newsletter at <https://cureparkinsons.org.uk/newsletter/>.

Then, read about *The Movers & Shakers ‘Parky Charter’ petition*. Please sign the petition to swell the numbers.

Also, note the latest Cure Parkinson’s spring research round-up to be held on April 17th from 1.30pm to 6.00pm. You can book a virtual place at this meeting to hear from their funded researchers about updates from the upcoming Montelukast trial and the Lixipark study results.

PARKINSON’S TRIALS NEEDING VOLUNTEERS....!

1. Developing a 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 contact Natasha Lyons by email at 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**.

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

The 'take part' hub on the Parkinson's UK website gives details of this trial, 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

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