

JULY 2025

Barbara Marquardt, Editor, M.Ed., MCHES, WCP, RYT

JULY MEETING / Wednesday, July 2, 2025 2:15 p.m.

We welcome **Ignacio ("Nacho") Mata, PhD Cleveland Lerner College of Medicine and Assistant Professor at Case Western Reserve University** who will talk on Parkinson's Disease, Genetics, Why I Should Care? He will provide an update on his important work since he last presented to us a couple of years ago. Dr. Mata's lab is working toward identifying and understanding the genes that play a role in those diseases that affect the brain (neurological disorders). These include the very well-known Parkinson's disease (PD), but also other, less common, disorders, such as a form of PD that presents with severe cognitive problems/dementia (PDD) and another type of dementia called Dementia with Lewy Bodies (DLB).

Cleveland Heights Senior Activity Center/One Monticello Blvd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

AUGUST MEETING / Wednesday, August 6, 2025 2:15 p.m.

PEP Picnic at Forest Hills Park in Cleveland Heights at Noon-2 p.m.

From David Brandt

A couple of items of interest. First, a new support group named Parkinson Disease Virtual Sisterhood Support Workshop is for women only who have been diagnosed with PD. Started by Tina of Barrow Fit Exercise Therapy & Wellness and including group facilitator Theresa of Creative Caregiver Support, they meet virtually every 3rd Thursday of the month on Zoom from 4-5 p.m. Please email tina@barrowfit.com for information.

Second, for those who have a certain amount of mobility, Shaker Rocks in Shaker Hts. offers free Up Ending Parkinsons classes for those with PD along with one care partner. The classes are Mondays from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. and Wednesdays from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Please call 216-848-0460 for information. The classes have been running since April 2024 with amazing success and popularity.

Following is a long list of Parkinson's related in-person events in Northeast Ohio through the summer and fall.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, June 8, 2025 – Moving Day Cleveland Put on by the Parkinson's Foundation. It will be held at the Cleveland Metroparks Brookside Reservation starting at 9 a.m. Get ready to exercise, explore Parkinson's resources, join in the uplifting **We Move Ceremony** and enjoy the **Moving Day Walk**. Please contact Megan Green at 614-918-7307 or at mgreen@parkinson.org

Saturday June 28 – Living In Motion, Living Your Best Life with PD 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at InMotion in Beachwood. Attendees will learn about the **FREE classes** and programs at InMotion and meet professionals in social work, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and nutrition. Dr. Jori Fleisher, a movement disorders neurologist at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago will be the keynote speaker. The event is free but registration is required. Please visit <https://beinmotion.org/livinginmotion/> for the registration link and event schedule. *Cont'd on page 2*

TO REACH US AT PEP 440-742-0153

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Facebook – Parkinson Education Program of Greater Cleveland

Saturday-Sunday, August 2-3, 2025 24-Hour Walk for Parkinson's presented by Papa's Path Starts 9 a.m. Saturday and a 2.3 mile parade to Ahuja Medical Center starts at 9 a.m. Sunday at Beachwood High School Track, 2360 Richmond Rd. Call Amy Eisenberg at 440-376-3869 or aeisenberg0510@gmail.com for registration details.

Saturday, August 16 Empower U presented by Cleveland Clinic – More details for this annual event will be provided in an upcoming PEP Newsletter.

Sunday, September 14 Pals in Motion presented by InMotion at Beachwood High School Track Events include a 5k run, 5k walk, Virtual Run/Walk, 1 mile walk, and many family-friendly activities. More details to follow in an upcoming PEP Newsletter.

Saturday November 1 University Hospitals 16th Annual Boot Camp at the Marriott Hotel in Beachwood. More details to follow in an upcoming PEP Newsletter.

Eye Test can Distinguish Parkinson's from Secondary Parkinsonism"

(Excerpt from <https://parkinsonsnewstoday.com>)

Patients with Parkinson's had a lower density of nerve fibers: Study---Imaging of nerves in the eyes may be used to differentiate between Parkinson's disease and secondary forms of parkinsonism, a new study shows.

The study, "Corneal confocal microscopy differentiates patients with secondary parkinsonism from idiopathic Parkinson's disease," was published in NPJ Parkinson's Disease.

Parkinson's disease can cause abnormalities in the nerves that connect the eyes to the brain, which are generally less affected in secondary parkinsonism. These nerves can be visualized using a technique called corneal confocal microscopy, or CCM. In this study, scientists in China tested whether CCM might be used to reliably distinguish between true Parkinson's disease and secondary parkinsonism.

To read the full article, please visit: <https://parkinsonsnewstoday.com/news/eye-test-distinguish-parkinsons-secondary-parkinsonism>

Patients in Pilot Study See Promise in Equine-Assisted Therapy

(Excerpt from <https://parkinsonsnewstoday.com>)

Texas A&M researchers hope to prove effectiveness of approach. Parkinson's disease patients in a pilot study testing the effects of equine-associated therapy report that they enjoy working with horses, while researchers say they hope results from the program will provide evidence of its benefits.

"We hope to show there is effectiveness in this type of treatment to apply for larger-scale grants, with our goal being a six-week program to see just how effective equine-assisted therapy is at aiding people with Parkinson's," Deanna Kennedy, PhD, an assistant professor of health and kinesiology Texas A&M University, which is testing the therapy, said in a university news story.

The team has not yet published results. Working with horses may help counteract Parkinson's symptoms, according to Kennedy. "Equine-assisted therapy has shown remarkable benefits for individuals with cerebral palsy, improving gait, balance and coordination largely due to the unique, rhythmic movement of the horse and the emotional bond formed between horse and rider," she said.

To read the full article, please visit: <https://parkinsonsnewstoday.com/news/patients-pilot-study-see-promise-equine-assisted-therapy/>

Interesting Facts from PMD Alliance

- ◆ In the U.S., there are approximately 6,360 people diagnosed for every 1 practicing Movement Disorder Specialist
- ◆ 2,373 Long-term Care Professionals trained in certified Parkinson's Disease care
- ◆ 68 Continuing medical education scholarships awarded to early-career Movement Disorder Physicians

Japan's Stem Cell Scientists Claim Breakthrough in Parkinson's Treatment

(Excerpt from Neurology, News)

It's a small study, but it could change everything for neurodegenerative diseases. In a world-first clinical trial, Japanese scientists have successfully implanted lab-grown brain cells into Parkinson's disease patients — and early results suggest the treatment may actually work.

If the results hold, the implications could be enormous — not just for Parkinson's, but for other neurodegenerative diseases too. Huntington's, ALS, even Alzheimer's could be future targets for similar cell-replacement strategies.

Scientists have had the idea to replace dead cells directly in the brain for decades. In the 1980s and '90s, some researchers tried transplanting fetal brain tissue into patients, but the results were inconsistent. Some patients improved, others didn't. Tumors and uncontrolled movements were common side effects. And the ethical concerns surrounding fetal tissue never went away.

This new study from Japan takes a new approach to this idea. Instead of fetal tissue, researchers used induced pluripotent stem (iPS) — adult cells that have been genetically reprogrammed to behave like embryonic stem cells. These versatile cells can be turned into nearly any cell type in the body. And that includes the dopamine-producing neurons that Parkinson's destroys.

Promising, though not perfect — Seven patients were enrolled in the study. One dropped out before surgery due to a COVID-19 infection, and another received the transplant in two stages and was evaluated only for safety (not for drug efficacy).

None of the patients had any major side effects and four showed improvements in movement when off their usual medications. Their average motor scores improved by 20%, and brain scans confirmed that the implanted cells were producing dopamine. A fifth patient improved while on medication. One patient didn't improve, but their symptoms didn't worsen either.

This trial is the most advanced test yet of iPS-cell-derived neurons in human patients — and the results may open the door to regulatory approval. Sumitomo Pharma, the company which helped manufacture the cells, plans to seek approval to manufacture and sell the treatment in Japan by the end of fiscal 2025. If successful, it would become only the second approved iPS-cell-based regenerative medicine product in the country, after a treatment for heart disease.

PD Question Corner

Email: barbaramarquardt@outlook.com

Question: What are some common sources of neurotoxins related to Parkinson's?

Answer: Some common sources of neurotoxins related to Parkinson's could include the following. This list includes all things to consider avoiding:

- ◆ Mold
- ◆ Farmed fish
- ◆ Mercury amalgam (silver fillings)
- ◆ Lead in water
- ◆ Paint and make-up products like lipstick
- ◆ Many prescription drugs
- ◆ Poor air quality from toxins used on non-organic farms
- ◆ Golf courses
- ◆ Wild Fires
- ◆ Food storage in plastic
- ◆ Arsenic in water
- ◆ Food sprayed with pesticides
- ◆ Food storage in plastics

TRIBUTES

Jim Haskett

Linda and Bill Athens

**In Memory of Bob Cvelbar
Barbara Marquardt**

Laughter is Medicine

What does a bicycle call its dad?

Pop cycle!

We need your donations to continue bringing you the PEP News and for other expenses. A special thanks to those who contribute at the monthly meetings. To send a donation, please make your checks payable to Parkinson Education Program and mail to 2785 Edgehill Rd., Cleveland Heights, OH 44106

PEP NEWS

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What's the Big Deal with the Gut-Brain Connection in Anything?

(Excerpt from: MeOverPD.org)

It affects your mood, your sleep, even your motivation to exercise. There's convincing evidence that it's the starting point for PD and could be responsible for long COVID's cognitive effects. And it sits about 2 feet below your brain.

The gut plays an obvious role in our health by digesting what we eat and extracting nutrients. But there's a growing appreciation among scientists that our digestive systems affect our general well-being in a much broader fashion. One fascinating aspect of the gut's widespread impact on health is its direct influence on and communication with the brain, a conduit known as the gut-brain axis.

Through direct signals from the vagus nerve, connects the brain and the gut, as well as through molecules secreted into the bloodstream from our gut microbes and immune cells that traffic from the gut to the rest of the body, our brains and our digestive tracts are in constant communication. And

when that communication goes off the rails, diseases and disorders can result.

The gut may also be the origin for some brain disorders. In PD, a neurodegenerative condition that affects motor neurons in the brain, gut issues such as constipation and heartburn precede movement symptoms by years or even decades.

Researchers have found differences in the gut microbiome in patients with Parkinson's. And a 2024 study from Harvard researchers found that damage to the upper digestive tract, as with GERD or chronic ulcers, increases the risk of developing PD. . These protein clusters, known as Lewy bodies, may originate in the gut—studies have shown that the misfolded protein can traffic directly from the gut to the brain via the vagus nerve, and people whose vagus nerve has been severed (a rare surgical treatment for severe ulcers) have lowered risk of Parkinson's

DISCLAIMER: The material contained in this newsletter is intended to inform. PEP makes no recommendations or endorsements in the care and treatment of PD. Always consult your own physician before making any changes. No one involved with the newsletter receives financial benefit from any programs/products listed.