About The Parkinson's Disease Research Fund

The Parkinson's Disease Research Fund at Albany Medical Center provides financial support to research projects that are not otherwise supported by industry or govermental sources. The fund is used for salary support, durable equipment, operating costs and other expenses associated with the conduct of these research projects. The mission of our research program is to investigate better ways to recognize, measure and treat the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease(PD) as well as explore ways to prevent or cure this and related disorders. Our past accomplishments include the reporting of neurological outcomes associated with exposure to environmental toxins including PCBs as the result of collaboration with regional scientists including environmental toxicologists at the Wadsworth Labs. We have also been fortunate to be part of a genetics research effort that lead to the discovery of risk modifying genes for PD as well as demonstrating the interaction of these genes with environmental factors such as caffeine consumption and smoking.

Current projects are focused on the characterization of depression in PD through the measurement of stress hormones, evaluating the ability of music therapy to improve the fluidity of walking in PD, and finding better ways to predict the long term outcomes in patients treated with deep brain stimulation (DBS). In the next phase of our genetics research, we are looking to characterize the differences in the microbacterial make up of the GI tracts of patients that might make them more susceptible to getting PD. We have also put together a collaborative research team here at AMC that includes our colleagues, Dr. Julie Pilitsis in the neurosugical department and Dr. Damian Shin in the neurophysiology laboratory. With this team in place, we now have a powerful translational reasearch network that is taking the lessons and questions that come out of our PD clinic and in the neurosurgical suite and testing these hypotheses in the laboratory using animal models of PD. These projects already include explorations of anxiety, compulsivity and pain in PD, the mechanisms of how DBS works at a cellular and molecular level. We are also focused on developing new targets in the brain for DBS that might treat symptoms that do not respond to current surgical techniques.

With the generous support of our community, we can continue to do the hard work that is necessary to make the kind of progress that will improve the quality of life for patients and families affected by PD and hopefully, someday soon, lead to a cure.

To learn more, click on the buttons