

Parkinson's discovery could lead to earlier diagnosis

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(Medical Xpress)—A new study could help earlier diagnosis of Parkinson's disease, after a Malaysian researcher working for Newcastle University in the UK identified that even early in the disease people experience symptoms.

While movement - motor - problems are the main symptom of Parkinson's disease, non-motor problems such as drooling, [anxiety](#) and bowel problems affect a large number of patients and begin sooner than previously thought. Earlier diagnosis could lead to earlier treatment and therefore allow patients to have a better quality of life.

In the study, published in the journal *Neurology*, the [medical journal](#) of the American Academy of Neurology, researchers from Newcastle University compared 159 people with newly-diagnosed Parkinson's disease to 99 people of similar ages who did not have the disease. Participants were asked whether they experienced any of the 30 non-motor symptoms screened for, including [sexual problems](#), [sleep problems](#) and [gastrointestinal problems](#).

Study author Dr Tien K. Khoo, said: "Often people don't even mention these symptoms to their doctors, and doctors don't ask about them, yet many times they can be treated effectively."

The people with Parkinson's disease had an average of eight of the non-motor problems, compared to three non-motor symptoms for the people who did not have the disease. Among the most common symptoms for

those with Parkinson's disease included drooling, urinary urgency, constipation, anxiety and a reduced [sense of smell](#). These were all significantly more common in people with Parkinson's disease than in those without the disease.

For example, 56 percent of the people with Parkinson's had problems with excess saliva or drooling, compared to 6 percent of those without the disease. A total of 42 percent of those with Parkinson's had constipation, compared to 7 percent of the [control group](#). For anxiety, it was 43 percent compared to 10 percent.

Dr Khoo said: "These results show that Parkinson's affects many systems in the body, even in its earliest stages. Often these symptoms affect people's quality of life just as much if not more than the movement problems that come with the disease. Both doctors and patients need to bring these symptoms up and consider available treatments."

Newcastle University's Professor David Burn, Chief Investigator of the ICICLE-PD project, which this study is part of, said: "Hopefully clinicians can use these findings to improve the treatment of the thousands of people worldwide who suffer with Parkinson's disease. The earlier we can get a diagnosis the quicker treatment can start and patient's [quality of life](#) will improve.

"This is one part of a much bigger study, which we are hoping will lead to better treatments for this devastating disease. "

Provided by Newcastle University

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