

Parkinson's symptoms improve with weekly regimens of both physical and cognitive exercises

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Immunohistochemistry for alpha-synuclein showing positive staining (brown) of an intraneural Lewy-body in the Substantia nigra in Parkinson's disease. Credit: Wikipedia

Parkinson's patients' motor and non-motor symptoms were improved with a weekly exercise regimen that included physical and cognitive tasks, according to new research presented today (18 December) at The Physiological Society early career conference, Future Physiology 2019: Translating Cellular Mechanisms into Lifelong Health Strategies.

Parkinson's Disease is a chronic neurodegenerative disease that can lead to disability and make it harder to lead an active lifestyle. Previous research has shown that either physical or cognitive exercises are effective at improving and sustaining cognitive and/or physical function in people with Parkinson's.

However, doing different types of exercise (e.g. circuit training also including cognitive challenges), may be more beneficial in improving motor and non-motor symptoms.

Researchers at the University of Kent studied Parkinson's patients that performed a weekly multi-modal regime (physical and cognitive exercises). This group participated in weekly exercise sessions for over a year and were assessed every four months for at least a year (some participants continued on for two or three years).

This once-a-week exercise programme with both physical and cognitive exercises for Parkinson's disease patients showed an improvement specifically in one-minute sit-to-stand tests and a cognitive test called MiniMental but no other significant changes (i.e. no decline) in cognitive and physical health. This is especially positive as Parkinson's is a degenerative disease, so the expected outcome, without any interventions, for these symptoms, would be a decline.

These findings are important because they could allow Parkinson's [disease](#) patients to see improvements in their symptoms by correctly tailoring their exercise regimens to include both physical and cognitive

[exercise.](#)

Anna Ferrusola-Pastrana, a researcher who was involved with the work said:

"Finding the right set of exercises, both cognitive and physical, to improve Parkinson's treatment is an important step towards giving Parkinson's patients a better quality of life. This research is working towards honing this set of exercises, which can then potentially be performed by patients, with or without assistance at home."

Provided by The Physiological Society

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