

Family history of melanoma linked to Parkinson's disease

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People with a family history of melanoma may have a greater risk of developing Parkinson's disease, according to a study released today that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 61st Annual Meeting in Seattle, April 25 to May 2, 2009.

The study involved nearly 157,000 people who did not have Parkinson's disease. They were asked if their parents or siblings had been diagnosed with melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Researchers then traced their progress for a period of 14 to 20 years. During that time, 616 of the people were diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Researchers found that people with a reported family history of melanoma were nearly twice as likely to develop Parkinson's as people with no family history.

"The results from this study suggest that melanoma and Parkinson's could share common genetic components," said study author Xiang Gao, MD, PhD, of the Harvard University School of Public Health in Boston, MA. "More research needs to be done to examine the relationship between these two diseases."

Other studies have shown that people with Parkinson's disease have a greater risk of developing melanoma.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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