

Pain Is Common in Parkinson's Disease

Nearly 70 percent of patients with Parkinson's disease report pain, which is significantly higher than the frequency of pain in healthy controls, according to a brief report in the Archives of Neurology.

"Patients with Parkinson's disease often complain of painful sensations," which may involve body parts affected or unaffected by dystonia, Dr. Giovanni Defazio, from the University of Bari in Italy, and colleagues point out.

Dystonia, a hallmark feature of Parkinson's disease, refers to the cluster of movement disorders in which sustained muscle contractions occur and cause tremor, twisting or abnormal postures. These movements are involuntary and can be painful.

Whether Parkinson's patients are more likely than their peers in the general population to have pain, however, has been unclear.

To investigate, the researchers surveyed 402 Parkinson's disease patients and 317 healthy controls about the same age regarding their pain, when it began, the type, and the location.

Overall, 70 percent of patients had pain compared with 63 percent of the controls, the report indicates. The difference, the authors note, was primarily due to a lack of dystonia in the control group.

Pain unrelated to dystonia occurred with comparable frequency in each group, hovering around 64 percent. Still, the authors noted a link between Parkinson's disease and pain, starting after parkinsonian symptom onset.

Compared with controls, Parkinson's disease patients were more likely to have cramping and central neurological pain. In 22 percent of patients with dystonic pain and 25 percent with nondystonic pain, the pain began prior to starting antiparkinsonian therapy.

"Our findings suggest that pain among Parkinson's disease patients is heterogeneous in quality, body localization, and relationship with the clinical onset of Parkinson's disease," the authors conclude.

The results, they add, may have clinical implications for designing studies to better understand the nature of pain in Parkinson's disease patients "and identifying specific treatment strategies."

Courtesy: <http://www.globalaging.org/health/us/2008/parkinson.htm>