

Impulse Control

Are PD Treatments Associated With Compulsive Behaviors?

The May issue of *Archives of Neurology* reports on a study that associates Parkinson's disease treatments with compulsive behaviors. NPF has funded studies on Parkinson's disease patients and impulse control disorders at NPF's Center of Excellence at Northwestern University. To learn more about this topic, listen to Dr. Tanya Simuni on Parkinson.org answer the question, "Is compulsive behavior a side effect of PD medications?"

NPF's medical director, Dr. Michael Okun reports that, "This study is an important step in providing higher quality care to our Parkinson's disease patients. We now understand there are serious risks that may be associated with dopamine agonists and serious complications may occur in almost 1 in 5 people taking this class of drugs. Physicians, family members and patients should understand the potential risks of dopamine agonists before they undergo a trial of these medications. Though the effects may be positive, when compulsive and impulse issues emerge they can result in very damaging personal and family issues. If patients and families are aware up front of the risks, they can quickly discontinue therapy if problems are encountered."

Parkinson's Disease Treatments Associated With Compulsive Behaviors

CHICAGO – Pathological gambling, compulsive shopping, binge eating and other impulse control disorders appear to be more common among individuals taking dopamine agonist medications for Parkinson's disease, according to a report in the May issue of *Archives of Neurology*, one of the JAMA/Archives journals.

These behaviors have been reported previously in patients with Parkinson's disease, according to background information in the article. Preliminary estimates of impulse control disorders in this population range from 1.7 percent to 6.1 percent for gambling, 2 percent to 4 percent for compulsive sexual behavior and 0.4 percent to 3 percent for compulsive buying. Daniel Weintraub, M.D., of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and colleagues studied 3,090 patients being treated for Parkinson's disease at 46 movement disorder centers in the United States and Canada. Impulse control disorders were identified in 13.6 percent of patients, including gambling in 5 percent, compulsive sexual behavior in 3.5 percent, compulsive buying in 5.7 percent, binge-eating disorder in 4.3 percent and two or more of those in 3.9 percent. The disorders were more common in individuals taking dopamine agonists compared with patients not taking dopamine agonist (17.1 vs. 6.9 percent).



Additional variables were associated with these disorders included the use of levodopa, another therapy for Parkinson's disease; living in the United States; being younger or unmarried; smoking cigarettes; and having a family history of gambling problems. "Dopamine agonist treatment in Parkinson's disease is associated with 2- to 3.5-fold increased odds of having an impulse control disorder," the authors write. "This association represents a drug class relationship across impulse control disorders. The association of other demographic and clinical variables with impulse control disorders suggests a complex relationship that requires additional investigation to optimize prevention and treatment strategies." Dopamine agonists are increasingly used to treat other conditions, including restless legs syndrome and fibromyalgia, the authors note. "Larger epidemiologic studies in these other populations are needed to examine the possible relationships between dopamine agonist treatment, other clinical features and impulse control disorders," they conclude.

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