

Abdominal massage to ease constipation in people with Parkinson's



Project information

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| Lead researcher | Dr Doreen McClurg |
| Location | Glasgow Caledonian University |
| Cost | £33,576 over 12 months |
| Start date | April 2010 |
| Type of project | Innovation |
| Project code | K-0908 |

Project background

Constipation is one of the most common problems for people with Parkinson's, affecting up to 80% of those with the condition. Although constipation may not be life-threatening it can make people feel sick or bloated, get cramps or feel unwell. Constipation can:

- affect the way the drugs used to treat Parkinson's are absorbed by the body, with the result that they may not work as well.
- put pressure on the bladder, leading to embarrassing accidents, with some people then drinking less liquid, which makes the constipation even worse and can lead to dehydration.

Eating fibre can make bowel movements easier. But some people with Parkinson's have trouble with chewing and swallowing food, so they may not eat enough fibre. Even when people with Parkinson's do eat 'enough' fibre, it may only lead to them feeling bloated without actually helping their constipation.

What the researchers are doing

Until the 1950s, people often used massage on the lower stomach (the abdomen) to treat constipation. The idea was that it helped make people feel less bloated and meant they could take fewer laxatives. In recent years, abdominal massage has had a bit of a revival, but we don't have any evidence to show how well it may work for people with Parkinson's.

Dr McClurg wants to find out if it's practical to teach people with Parkinson's or their carers to treat constipation using abdominal massage. Her team will also build up evidence on the effect constipation has on people's quality of life, and what people with Parkinson's think of abdominal massage as a treatment.

The researchers will look at the effect of giving the participants or their carers advice about constipation as well as abdominal massage training for six weeks. They'll be compared with a group who only receive the advice without the training.

When the project ends, the research team will have information about the bowel habits, general Parkinson's symptoms, medications, bladder problems and quality of life from people with Parkinson's both before and after learning abdominal massage. Depending on the results and whether people with Parkinson's receive any benefit from the treatment, the researchers can then go on to do a more comprehensive study.

How the research will help people with Parkinson's

Bladder and bowel issues aren't always high priority for the Health Service but they can have a huge impact on people with Parkinson's and their carers. This research will highlight the effect of constipation on the quality of life of people with Parkinson's, so medical professionals can understand how important it is. If the study finds that abdominal massage is helpful, it will give people with Parkinson's a 'self-care' way to relieve constipation at home, without needing medication and without side-effects.

For more information, please talk to the Research Team

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