

# PEP NEWS

Newsletter of the Parkinson Education Program of Greater Cleveland

JANUARY 2019

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## JANUARY MEETING

No Meeting. Happy Holidays!



### From David Brandt

As the 2018 year ends, here are some of the highlights as noted by the Michael J. Fox Foundation:

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is reviewing **two experimental drugs to treat "off" times in Parkinson's**. If approved they would be the first treatments directly funded by MJFF to come to market.

**Seven therapies targeting alpha-synuclein**, the sticky protein that clumps in the brain in Parkinson's, are in clinical trials to see if they could slow or stop disease progression. Testing of drugs targeting *LRRK2* and *GBA* mutations are also moving forward in clinical trials.

**MJFF's game-changing Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative (PPMI)** is a cornerstone for new collaborations including the \$24 million Accelerating Medicines Partnership: Parkinson's Disease, which will use PPMI samples to develop biomarkers for PD.

**More than 28,000 people are registered for Fox Insight**, MJFF's online clinical study gathering data directly from patients about the lived experience of Parkinson's.

**More than 18,000 advocates contacted their lawmakers** more than 52,000 times on various policy issues affecting the PD community.

Progress continues to be made with the hope of finding a cure.

**Happy Holiday and a Happy New Year to All!**

### Upcoming events on the Calendar.

April 5, 2019 – 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Parkinson Symposium put on by the Ohio Parkinson Foundation Northeast Region. The event will be from 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. There is no charge for this event, door prizes and a free lunch will be provided. Register by March 25 at [ohparkinson.org](http://ohparkinson.org) (preferred) or call 1-800-630-3193.

### PEP February Meeting

We will have a day at the movies. Please join us for the movie *Adele and Everything After*. This movie was shown at the Cleveland International Film Festival a couple of years back and is the moving story of a woman with an untreatable heart condition whose life is transformed by a service dog, and what happens when she has to let go of the loyal companion who changed her life. We had the Director of the facility that trains service dogs at one of our PEP meetings last year along with a couple of their service dogs. You will be amazed at what the service dogs can do for those in need, including those with PD. Popcorn will be served!

### TRIBUTES

We need your donations to continue bringing you the PEP News and for other expenses. A special thanks to those who contribute at the monthly meetings. To send a donation, please make your checks payable to Parkinson Education Program and mail to 17930 Birch Hill Drive; Chagrin Falls, OH 44023

## **Parkinson's Disease Question Corner**

Email [barbaramarquardt@outlook.com](mailto:barbaramarquardt@outlook.com) with questions!

**Question:** Sometimes I have a difficult time driving with Parkinson's, do you know of a resource for help with transportation?

**Answer:** Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging (WRAAA) is great at connecting you to the resources you may need.

The Family Caregiver Support team at WRAAA is there to help identify exactly what your unique needs are as a caregiver, and then connect you to every resource that may be able to help. These resources can include respite, support groups, and even financial support. WRAAA also offers consultation over the phone for caregivers who want information or coaching.

This service is completely free to caregivers. Feel free to talk about transportation opportunities and other programs and services that are available in your local community.

Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging (WRAAA) is a private nonprofit corporation. They were organized and designated by the State of Ohio to be the planning, coordinating, and administrative agency for federal and state aging programs in **Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina** counties.

Even if you are not a senior, WRAAA could be a good resource to start with to point you in the right direction. Additional resources could be connecting with family and friends to carpool, and/or contacting a private car service like Uber. Perhaps, your place of worship may also offer transportation services.

WRAAA is available 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Mon. thru Fri.

You can reach WRAAA at **216-586-3441** or **800-626-7277, ext. 3131.** / Email your request to [cwillis@areaagingsolutions.org](mailto:cwillis@areaagingsolutions.org)

Ref. <https://www.areaagingsolutions.org/programs-services/family-caregiver-support/>  
<https://www.areaagingsolutions.org/about-us/>

## **Elevated Blood Sugar Levels have a DIRECT Relationship with Brain Shrinkage**

(Excerpt from [www.naturalhealth365.com](http://www.naturalhealth365.com))

**M**any people eat foods rich in sugar while they are studying to stay awake. However, recent studies have shown that too much sugar is actually bad for brain health. A group of German researchers published a paper in the journal *Neurology* that established a direct relationship between elevated sugar levels and reduced brain size.

The body uses glucose from food as its primary source of energy. However, there is a limit to how much sugar the body can actually utilize. If too much of it is present in the body, they will remain in the bloodstream since the cells have enough supply already. This condition is commonly observed in patients who suffer from diabetes or resistance to insulin, a hormone responsible for absorbing sugar from the blood. Patients without these conditions can also suffer from elevated glucose levels due to their lifestyle.

High blood sugar level can lead to diseases like stroke, heart disease, eye damage, and nerve damage. Recently, researchers discovered that it also causes the shrinking of the hippocampus, which is the brain region responsible for memory. Shrinkage of this area is associated with cognitive decline, Alzheimer's, and dementia. Moreover, the authors of the study also observed that people who had lower blood sugar levels have better memory and ability to learn new information.

Overall, this study showed that elevated sugar levels can cause **irreversible brain shrinkage**. This further highlights the importance of regulating glucose levels since too much of it can cause Alzheimer's and dementia, along with many other diseases.

### ***Regulating blood sugar levels***

It is important to take precautionary steps to avoid having too much sugar in the bloodstream, especially since brain shrinkage cannot be reversed. In addition,  
*(continued on last page)*

## This Watch Could Help Parkinson's Sufferers Write Again

(Excerpt from [www.weforum.org](http://www.weforum.org))

**M**icrosoft has invented a piece of wearable technology that it says can help to reduce hand tremors caused by Parkinson's disease. The Emma Watch uses vibrating motors – similar to those found in mobile phones – to distract the wearer's brain from trying to control the limbs.

It was named after Emma Lawton, a creative director and graphic designer who at 29 was diagnosed with Parkinson's. As a result of her hand tremors, Lawton was unable to write legibly and draw delicate designs – an important part of her work.

But Haiyan Zhang, innovation director at Microsoft Research in Cambridge in the UK, has invented a device that could change this. Inspired by Lawton's plight, Zhang spent months studying the disease. She learned that it caused a "feedback loop" in the patient's mind, which meant that the brain was effectively at war with itself – one half trying to move the hand and the other half trying to stop it. And this constant battle was responsible for the hand tremors. By temporarily short-circuiting that loop, Zhang believed that Lawton might regain some control over her hands. So she set about building and testing prototypes based on this idea.

Earlier this year, Lawton and Zhang got together to test a prototype of the Emma Watch, and found that it slowed Lawton's tremors enough that she could write her name for the first time in years. She then drew a straight line, and then a square.

### **How does it work?**

The device transmits vibrations into the arm, which distracts the brain from trying to control the limbs. The pattern of vibrations is controlled by an app on a device that is connected to the watch. Lawton can change the pattern to one that suits her best.

"It gives me some control there. The writing, it's not going to be perfect. But my God, it's better," says Lawton. Having appeared on the BBC's Big Fix program, Zhang has been inundated with requests for

help, but the Emma Watch is, for now at least, just a prototype. Zhang is continuing her research and working with neuroscientists on clinical studies to take the invention further.

In recent years, scientists have developed new technology to help people with Parkinson's disease. This wearable device helps sufferers monitor their symptoms, so that their doctors can alter their medication as appropriate.

In 2014, scientist Warren Grill won the Javits Neuroscience Investigator Award for his work on deep brain stimulation treatments. One patient in the study, who was in a wheelchair, was able to walk, make sandwiches, and even shovel snow after the implantation of Grill's device.

You can watch Lawton and Zhang talking about the Emma Watch here. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/watch-helps-parkinsons-sufferers-write-again/>

**TO REACH US AT PEP – 440-742-0153**

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Facebook – Parkinson Education Program of Greater Cleveland



**U-step walker by In-Step Mobility, 2017**  
Please call Elena at  
216-402-6975

### **TRIBUTES**

**In Memory of Ray Brandt  
Tina Pittmon-Polk**

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**In memory of Judy Weidenthal 1935-2017  
Daniel Weidenthal MD**

**DISCLAIMER:** The material contained in this newsletter is intended to inform. PEP makes no recommendations or endorsements in the care and treatment of Parkinson's disease. Always consult your own physician before making any changes.

## **PEP NEWS**

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Chagrin Falls, OH 44023

### ***Address Service Requested***

We try to keep our roster current. If you no longer wish to receive this bulletin or would like to receive it via email instead, notify Katherine.A.Kaminski@gmail.com or call 216-513-8990.

## **Elevated Blood Sugar Levels have a DIRECT Relationship with Brain Shrinkage** *(cont'd from page 2)*

too little sugar is also bad for the body and can induce coma or death. Healthy blood sugar levels should fall between 40 to 100 mg per deciliter. There are many ways to keep blood sugar levels in check. These include the following:

- **Exercise regularly** — Physical activity doesn't just help you lose weight, it also makes the body more responsive to insulin activity. This allows sugar to go to the cells that need it instead of staying in the bloodstream. Some exercises that you can try out are weightlifting, brisk walking, running, biking, and swimming.
- **Reduce carb intake** — The body gets sugars from foods rich in carbohydrates so when you eat too much of these, insulin activity fails and sugar levels increase. Keeping track of the carbs you eat can help you know when you've had too much.
- **Stay hydrated** — Increasing fluid intake helps the kidneys get rid of excess sugars through the urine. It's best to drink water over sweetened drinks like juices since these could increase sugar levels, promote weight gain, and increase diabetes risk.
- **Manage stress** — When a person is stressed, the body releases hormones called glucagon and cortisol that can actually cause sugar levels to increase. To reduce stress levels, you can try out yoga or meditation, which can also improve insulin production.
- **Get enough sleep** — Lack of sleep can cause sugar levels to go up and reduces insulin sensitivity. Moreover, people who are deprived of sleep also eat more and have higher cortisol levels. By getting adequate sleep, you can keep blood sugar at a healthy level.

