

UCSD to Offer Free Public Seminar on Latest in Parkinson's Disease Research and Therapies

October 11, 2006 |

Researchers and clinicians from the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) School of Medicine will offer a free seminar, designed for patients and interested community members on the latest research and therapies for Parkinson's disease. The seminar, co-sponsored by the Parkinson's Disease Association of San Diego (PDASD), will be held in the auditorium of UCSD Hospital in Hillcrest, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. on Saturday, October 28. Audience members are asked to register by phoning 858-273-6763.

Speakers will address topics ranging from sensory and motor problems to cognitive and psychological issues related to Parkinson's disease; neuroimaging studies, surgical options and growth factor therapy for the movement disorder, estimated to affect 1.5 million Americans.

The symposium schedule:

8:30 **Introductions:** Dr. David D. Song, Co-Director, UCSD Parkinson's Disease Research Center; Dr. Ron Hendrix, CEO, PDASD; Dr. Catherine Rodriguez, Vice President, PDASD.

8:45 **David Song, M.D., Ph.D.;** Director, UCSD Movement Disorders Clinic; Assistant Professor of Neurosciences, UCSD, "The Progressive Burden of Disabilities in Parkinson's Disease: The Need for More Research"

9:20 **Howard Poizner, Ph.D.,** Professor, UCSD Institute for Neural Computation, "Do Sensory Problems in the Hand and Arm Contribute to Motor Problems in Parkinson's Disease?"

10:00 **J. Vincent Filoteo, Ph.D.,** Associate Professor, UCSD, "'Cognitive and Psychiatric Functioning in Individuals with Parkinson's Disease'"

10:35 **Deborah Harrington, Ph.D.,** Professor of Radiology, UCSD, "'Functional Neuroimaging as a Tool to Understand Cognitive Issues in Parkinson's Disease'"

11:15 **David Barba, M.D.,** Professor of Neurosurgery, UCSD, "Surgical Options for Parkinson's Disease"

11:50 **Mark Tuszynski, M.D., Ph.D.**, Professor of Neurosciences, UCSD, "Growth Factor Therapy for PD: Preventing Progression and Improving Treatment"

12:20 Break

12:45 **Panel Q&A**

1:15 Closing Comments

Parkinson's disease belongs to a group of neurologic conditions called movement disorders, which include diseases of the motor system that cause either too much or too little movement. The disease usually affects people over the age of 50 and is characterized by the loss of brain cells that produce dopamine, a chemical that is critical to normal function of the central nervous system. The four primary symptoms of Parkinson's disease are: rest tremor, or trembling of the hands, feet, or jaw that occurs at rest; rigidity, or stiffness of the limbs and trunk; bradykinesia, or slowness of movement; and postural instability, or impaired balance and coordination. Early symptoms are subtle and gradually worsen over time. As these symptoms become more pronounced, patients develop increasing difficulty with walking, talking and other activities of daily living. There are no blood or laboratory tests available to diagnose Parkinson's disease, but the accuracy of correct clinical diagnosis by experienced movement disorders specialists is extremely high.

There is currently no cure for Parkinson's disease, though there are a variety of medications that can provide dramatic relief of the motor symptoms for most patients. However, over time many patients gradually develop motor complications that aren't helped by medications. Disabling non-motor symptoms – such as memory problems, depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, compulsive behaviors and drops in blood pressure – can become increasingly more apparent, and be more debilitating than movement or mobility problems for some patients.

"Currently, little is known about the cause and treatment of non-motor symptoms in Parkinson's disease, but research at UCSD is increasing our knowledge in these areas," said Song, the symposium organizer. "There is a great need for more research to understand and treat these non-motor symptoms, to find better treatments of motor symptoms, and to find treatments that will slow down progression of this disease and ultimately lead to a cure."

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The seminar is free, but registration is required; phone (858) 273-6763 or toll-free (877) 273-6763.

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