



## An Overview of Young-Onset Parkinson's Disease – Clinical and Patient Perspectives

Thursday, October 13, 2022 | 7-8 a.m. | SEC Auditorium at DMU or Online

### Unanswered Questions Submitted via Zoom – Answered

*Feedback from Craig Haas is in blue; feedback from Allison Larson, PT, DPT, NCS is in purple.*

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**1. Are you and your family in counseling to address the stressors, etc. that you are/had been experiencing with this disease?**

Good question. Yes, we did seek counseling when I was diagnosed. We also had counseling prior to that in 2007 when my wife was diagnosed with TRAPS – a rare genetic disease. The counseling helped, but after my wife's father passed away in 2020, the challenges became more difficult. We were in counseling for the last 1-1/2 years of our marriage, but our divorce was finalized in August of this year.

We were married for 20 years. One of our counselors told us that a serious illness in one spouse increases the normal divorce rate from 50% to 75%. When both spouses have a serious illness, it increases to 90%. I thought we could make it; the illnesses were not the only factor, but they didn't help.

My ex-wife became verbally abusive, saying things like she didn't care if I took my medicine or not because the life insurance premium for my policy had been paid for the month. I filed for divorce shortly after a visit to my neurologist. I had to pause when filling out the paperwork because there is a section that asks things like, do you feel safe in your home, or does your spouse adequately care for you? Realistically I had to answer no based on her treatment of me.

This is part of why I became emotional during the presentation when I talked about not being able to smile. Non-verbal communication is important. I know that this was a huge factor in the decline of our marriage relationship.

**2. What is your diet like? Has any food affected how you feel?**

My diet is OK, could be better. A good healthy diet can make a huge difference. I know I feel better when I concentrate on eating lean meat and veggies.

One of the challenges with eating is consumption of protein. Having protein in your digestive tract while taking your Carbo-dopa Levodopa can hinder the absorption of the medicine. So, I must make sure that I separate my meals from my medicine by an hour or so. It can be tough because I often don't remember to take my meds until it is time to eat, but I do feel best when I take medicine an hour before a meal.

**3. Do the genetic markers tend to be hereditary, or do they appear randomly?**

I was tested for about 40 different markers and do not have any of them. I think they are all different. I only know two people whose Parkinson's is confirmed to be hereditary. I am taking the PD Moves Dance Class that DMU is involved with. There is a 90-year-old woman who is taking the class with her 60+ year old daughter. They both have PD. These are the only multi-generational people with PD that I have met, and I have met a lot.

I think Parkinson's would be much rarer if we would get rid of many of the chemicals we are exposed to.

**4. It was mentioned that Parkinson's is associated with an increased risk of muscle injury (such as a torn calf). To minimize this, do exercises need to be carefully considered and monitored before beginning?**

I have not seen data indicating a higher risk for musculoskeletal injury for individuals with Parkinson's disease; rather, the data suggests that early symptoms of Parkinson's disease can be misdiagnosed as common musculoskeletal conditions such as arthritis or a sports injury.

You should consult your doctor before doing any exercise. My experience with a torn calf is only my opinion based on my experience. I know what muscle rigidity due to PD feels like, and I was experiencing it that morning. I was well warmed up and stretched out when it happened, as I was 45 minutes into an hour-long class. I am not sure what most Neurologists or Kinesiologists would say, but my opinion is that you know your body and what it can do and what it can't.

You can see my blog for more info on my story: [craigbhaas.blogspot.com](http://craigbhaas.blogspot.com)

I also enjoy writing and self-published a [sci-fi novel](#) on Amazon.