



# THE PARKINSON'S AND MOVEMENT DISORDER FOUNDATION

Newsletter  Summer 2018

## The Parkinson's and Movement Disorder Foundation

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## Interview with PMDF 2018 Grant Winner

by Mary Ann Chapman, PhD

One of the major hypotheses in Parkinson's disease is that a protein known as alpha synuclein hops from one brain cell to another, wreaking havoc as it goes. But exactly how does the protein travel between cells? That is the question that Dr. Juan F. Reyes, a senior postdoctoral fellow at Linköping University located in Linköping, Sweden is studying. Dr. Reyes was one of the 2018 PMDF grant award winners, and I asked him, via e-mail, to tell us a little bit about his research and background.

*How did you get interested in movement disorder research?*

The growing incidence of neurodegenerative disorders among the elderly, coupled with the lack of innovative strategies designed to prevent the diseases from progressing, has sparked my research interest in Parkinson's disease and related disorders. We believe that understanding the underlying mechanisms involved in the transfer of alpha synuclein from one nerve cell to another will provide new avenues for treatment.

*What aspect of your research are you most excited about?*

I am most excited about developing an innovative strategy to delay the transfer of alpha synuclein between brain cells in Parkinson's disease. We have recently learned about a novel pathway within cells that appears to play a major role in this transfer. Elucidating the how and the why of alpha synuclein transfer will help us explore new research strategies.



*What are the major challenges in movement disorder research?*

The major challenge we are currently facing in the laboratory is the identification of key molecules that have a direct impact on the transfer of alpha synuclein between nerve cells. Given the limited knowledge of the genes that are involved, it is challenging to design effective medications. Nonetheless, we have made significant progress, and we are currently testing many different genes that we believe may play a role in the transfer of alpha synuclein.

## President's Letter



Dear friends of PMDF,

I'm sitting in my sister's living room contemplating the differences between the east and west coasts. My wife and I are on a two-week trip with stops in Florida, North Carolina, and Washington. It's pretty clear that we're not in California. Just about wherever you look you see either water or vegetation (if your view isn't blocked by rain). Even the curbstones are green.

We've stayed inside or in a vehicle most of the time, and the view outside has been inviting. I think maybe I should take a sweater and go out for a walk, but the blast of hot humid air that greets me on opening the door quickly disabuses me of that notion, so we've spent our time visiting with our friends and relatives rather than sight-seeing. Tomorrow, though, we'll be in D.C., and the sights there demand to be seen. Parkinson's disease has made me less energetic, especially in hot weather, so this may be a challenge. On the other hand, getting out and moving may restore some of that energy. We have three full days to find out.



Meanwhile, back at PMDF, our Move4U event was very successful, we're planning a great fall fundraiser, and we have some useful and interesting articles for you in the rest of this newsletter, so crank up that A/C or enjoy the dry heat and read on!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Mark Wadsworth".

Mark Wadsworth  
PMDF President

# Medication Prior Authorization

by Tiffany Do

After your doctor's visit, you expect to pick up your prescribed medicine at the pharmacy with no hassles because you have insurance to cover the cost. However, that is not always the case. Certain medications require so-called prior authorization. A prior authorization is a negotiation between the healthcare provider, drug manufacturer, and insurance group to determine whether a patient's insurance will cover the cost of the medication. It involves a diagnosis review, formulary alternatives, and other information to convince the insurance company that the medication is necessary for the patient. Prior authorizations are a way to minimize the cost of medications, making them more affordable for patients. Without this approval, the price of certain medications can be very expensive, easily reaching more than \$100.



What is the point of a prior authorization? The intention is to be a cost-saving method as well as safety precaution. One of the main reasons insurance groups require prior authorization is to determine the importance of the medication to the patient. A common example is listing the previous medications the patient has tried and “failed”, such as generic brands or cheaper medications. This is also known as a step therapy. As a patient, if you have not gone through this process, you will typically be denied the cost coverage until you meet the requirements for approval. If you do not meet these requirements, you will likely have to pay out of pocket for the medication.

How do you know if your medication requires a prior authorization? According to pharmacist Dr. Jenny Dang, when the pharmacy receives the prescription for the drug, they check the patient's insurance group to see if it is covered or pre-approved. If the drug requires an authorization, the pharmacy will notify the physician and the physician will complete the required forms for insurance to approve. There are rare instances in which pharmacists can complete the prior authorization themselves. The time it takes for the whole procedure to be completed depends on the drug company and insurance group. Dr. Dang notes that it typically takes less than one week, depending on the disease state. In the realm of neurology, some common medications that require prior authorizations are safinamide (Xadago<sup>®</sup>), rasagiline (Azilect<sup>®</sup>), pimavanserin (Nuplazid<sup>®</sup>), and dextromethorphan/quinidine (Nuedexta<sup>®</sup>). Dr. Dang has seen the cost of medications go from \$200 a month to \$0 thanks to approved prior authorizations, tremendously relieving the financial burden on patients.

Prior authorizations require a good deal of paperwork and time for both the provider and patient. Despite this, it is the most effective method insurance companies use to prevent unnecessary prescriptions of brand name drugs when generic versions are available. Prior authorizations are sometimes a necessary step for the provider to help patients receive the best medication for their condition and to minimize their financial burden.

# Another Successful Event in the Fight Against Movement Disorders!

by Tiffany Do



May 19th was a peaceful, overcast Saturday morning that promised ideal cool weather at Mile Square Park, perfect for the annual MOVE4U 5k walk/run event held by Parkinson's and Movement Disorder Foundation (PMDF) and National Spasmodic Torticollis Association (NSTA). Many long-time supporters, along with new faces, came out to participate in the event. More than 200 participants, volunteers, and sponsors gathered to promote awareness and support for Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders. Smiles and laughs were abundant on this fun-filled day, whether on the race-course, talking amongst one another, or playing with animals from Northwood Animal Hospital.

After the walk/run, everyone settled down, enjoying a tasty lunch provided by Katella Deli while the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners were announced. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner, with a prize of 2 Six Flags Magic Mountain tickets, was Dr. Mayank Pathak, dressed up as the superhero Robin—when asked about Batman, he jokingly responded the hero was still sleeping in his batcave. Second place went to Ryan Sennott, a young gentleman

who received 4 Knott's Berry Farm tickets. First place went to Uma Sethuraman, a seasoned marathon runner, bringing home 4 One-way Southwest E-tickets from Southwest Airlines (valued at \$800). Registered participants were automatically entered in a raffle prize giveaway that included gifts generously donated by Origins Massage and Bodyworks, Emerald Isle Golf Course, Masana Portrait Artwork NYC, and more.

A huge thank you to all the volunteers who helped make this event a wonderful success. And a special thanks to the companies who graciously sponsored this event: Katella Deli Bakery and Restaurant, One Pharmacy, Abbott Laboratories, Adamas Pharmaceuticals, Acadia Pharmaceuticals, Lundbeck, US WorldMeds, Pho K Tea, Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, Impax Laboratories, UCB Pharma, Avanir Pharmaceuticals and Neurocrine Pharmaceuticals. With their support, we were able to raise over \$30,000 for movement disorder research.







The Parkinson's and Movement  
Disorder Foundation Presents:  
Taste of Vietnam

Dinner • Silent Auction • Live Entertainment

Saturday, November 17, 2018  
5:00 PM—9:00 PM

Grand Garden Restaurant  
8894 Bolsa Ave.  
Westminster, CA 92683

\$100

For tickets & more information:  
call (714) 369-7426  
Or email [pmdf@pmdf.org](mailto:pmdf@pmdf.org)

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\_\_\_\_ Yes, I/we will be attending *Taste of Vietnam* Fundraiser.

\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is a check of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ tickets

\_\_\_\_ Please charge to my credit card \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ tickets

( ) MasterCard Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_ I will not be able to attend, but would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(your donation is tax-deductible)

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[www.pmdf.org](http://www.pmdf.org)

## **OUR MISSION**

To support basic and clinical research into the causes, treatments and cures for Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders such as dystonia, myoclonus, spasticity, and tremor.

The Parkinson's and Movement Disorder Foundation is committed to working with other organizations that have similar philosophies in an effort to bring together expertise from both basic and clinical science perspectives.

We are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for those who suffer from movement disorders and their families, through research, education, and community outreach.