

## Parkinson's Disease and Therapeutic Strategies

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### Abstract

Parkinson's disease is the second most common aged associated neurodegenerative disorder after Alzheimer affecting approximately 1% of the population above the age 50. James Parkinson for the first time medically described Parkinson disease as a neurological disorder in his famous work "An Essay of the shaking palsy". The pathological hallmark of PD is selective and progressive degeneration of dopaminergic neurons in the *substantia nigra pars compacta* of human brain and the accumulation of Lewy bodies in the surviving neurons. Cardinal symptoms of Parkinson's disease include resting tremor, rigidity, postural instability. Besides motor symptoms, several non-motor symptoms are manifested many years before the onset of motor symptoms. Parkinson's disease is classified into sporadic and familial PD. Therapeutic strategies prior to Levodopa and Deep Brain stimulation include bloodletting from the neck, vesicatories, shaking chair, hydrotherapy, spa treatments, light exercise and treating with hyoscyamine, arsenic, morphia, conium, Indian hemp" (cannabis). Though levodopa is the leading treatment for PD, it has many limitations. Stem cell therapy appears to be a promising therapy to replenish degenerated dopaminergic neurons.

**Keywords:** Parkinson's Disease; Motor Symptoms; Non-Motor Symptoms; Deep Brain Stimulation; Levodopa; Stem Cell Therapy; Biomarkers.

### Introduction

Parkinson's disease (PD) is the second most common aged associated neurodegenerative disorder after Alzheimer disease, affecting approximately 1% of the population above the age of 50. It is believed that 7-10 million people worldwide are suffering from PD [1]. Studies have shown that prevalence of PD in men is higher (one and half times more) than that of women [2]. With the increased in the life expectancy of the world population, numbers of PD patients are also expected to double by 2030 [3], posing a major health care burden.

The Indian traditional systems of medicine "Ayurved" texts from about 1000 BC provide descriptions which suggest the existence of symptoms similar to PD [4]. Ancient Chinese, inner canon yellow emperor, sources from about 450-500 BC also mention the treatment of diseases which are similar to PD [5]. Several other sources, including an Egyptian papyrus, the Bible and Galen's writings describe symptoms resembling those of PD [6]. Much later in 1817, James Parkinson, an English doctor, published his famous work "An Essay of the shaking palsy" reporting six cases of paralysis agitans. His essay for the first time described the symptoms of paralysis agitans [7,8]. Early neurologists who have contributed to the knowledge of the disease include Erb, Trousseau, Kinnier, Gower and Jean-Martin Charcot who, later, recognized the importance of James Parkinson's work and named the disease after him [8].

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The pathological hallmark of PD is selective and progressive degeneration of dopaminergic neurons (DAN) and the accumulation of Lewy bodies (LB)(intracellular cytoplasmic proteinaceous inclusions) in the *substantia nigra* (SN) of the mid brain resulting in dopamine deficiency in the brain. Alpha synuclein ( $\alpha$ -syn) is the major component of LB and

may act as a toxic factor mediating the pathology of PD [9]. Clinical signs of PD include resting tremor, bradykinesia, rigidity and postural instability. It can cause the patients to develop a forward or backward lean due to the loss of postural reflexes [10]. Besides these major motor symptoms, PD is usually associated with numerous non-motor symptoms (NMS).

Despite intensive and extensive studies conducted worldwide, the etiology of PD remains unclear. Although genetic elements and exposure to environmental toxins, such as herbicides, pesticides, and heavy metals are thought to play a crucial role in disease onset, ageing remains the predominant risk factor [11]. 95% PD patients is believed to have a sporadic component. Some studies suggest that environmental factors may be more important than that of the genetic factors in familial aggregation of PD. In most of the PD cases, the cause is environmental influence, probably toxins, and sustained neuronal loss due to progressing age [12]. Observing PD in 1-methyl-4-phenyl-1,2,3,6-tetrahydropyridine (MPTP) drug users regenerated curiosity in reassessing environmental influences [10].

Current therapeutic strategies for PD mitigate symptoms by the replacement of dopamine, with variable efficacy and considerable side effects. Levodopa (L-dopa) is a dopamine precursor and is the leading treatment of PD for over 40 years. L-dopa improves motor impairment by enhancing dopamine levels [13]. However, prolonged use of L-dopa leads to other motor dyskinesia (a category of movement disorders that are characterized by involuntary muscle movement) that undermine the benefits of treatment. Surgery has been used to reduce motor symptoms in advance cases where drugs are ineffective [14]. The development of effective treatment for PD is difficult because pathology is believed to be affected by several pathways. However, there are currently no established curative or preventive interventions, stemming from a poor understanding of the molecular mechanism(s) of the pathogenesis.

## Pathological features

### *Non-Motor Symptoms(NMS)*

NMS are the symptoms, which do not involve motor coordination of the central nervous system (CNS). NMS are manifested many years before the onset of motor symptoms in the patients of PD. NMS are commonly prevalent in a large proportion of PD patients, but these NMS are often overlooked in clinical practices due to lack of complaints by the

patients. These symptoms include neuropsychiatric symptoms (mental disorder and behavioral changes), sleep disorders (a medical disorder of the sleep patterns of a person or animal), fatigue (a subjective feeling of tiredness which is distinct from weakness and has a gradual onset), sensory symptoms (may affect sense like hearing, touch and taste), autonomic dysfunction (affect a small part of the autonomic nervous system or the entire autonomic nervous system), gastrointestinal symptoms (symptoms related to gastrointestinal), dopaminergic drug induced behaviour (non-motor fluctuation dysautonomia) and other symptoms [15].

Some of the NMS such as olfactory, fatigue, REM sleep behavior disorders, constipation, pain and depression appear at the early stage of the disorder and occur throughout the course of the disease. The frequency of NMS increases with the progress of the disease. Some non-dopaminergic neurotransmitters such as serotonergic, noradrenergic and cholinergic transmission are involved in most of the non-motor symptoms conjugated with PD [16].

Major NMS and related sub symptoms associated with PD pathology are listed in Table 1.

### *Motor symptoms*

Motor symptoms (MS) typically involve a loss of motor coordination or lead to restricted mobility. MS include resting tremor, rigidity, bradykinesia and postural instability.

*Resting Tremor:* In the initial stages of the disease, about 70% of patients experience a mild tremor in the hand or foot or less commonly in the jaw or face. A typical onset is shaking in one finger. The tremor comprises shaking or oscillating movement, and usually appears when a person's muscles are at rest, hence the name "resting tremor." The affected body part trembles when it is not performing any function. Typically, the fingers or hand will tremble when folded or when the arm is held loosely at the side.

*Bradykinesia:* Bradykinesia "slow movement" describes as a general reduction of spontaneous movement, which gives the appearance of abnormal stillness and reduce in facial expressivity. Bradykinesia causes difficulty with repetitive motion, such as finger tapping. Due to bradykinesia, patients with Parkinson's may have difficulty in performing everyday functions, such as buttoning a shirt, cutting food or brushing teeth. Patients who experience bradykinesia may walk with short, shuffling steps. Bradykinesia can affect a person's speech too, which may become quieter and less distinct as Parkinson's progresses.

**Table 1:** Major Non-motor symptoms and related sub symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease (PD) (modified from Bonnet et al 2012)

SL. No	Major NMSs	Related sub Symptoms
01.	Neuropsychiatric symptoms	Depression, anxiety, apathy, hallucination, attention deficit, cognitive impairment, dementia, dopaminergic dysregulation syndrome (usually related to L-dopa), impulse control disorders, panic attacks.
02.	Sleep Disorders	Random eye movement (REM), sleep behaviour disorder (possible premotor symptoms), excessive daytime somnolence, narcolepsy type "sleep attack", restless legs syndrome, periodic leg movements, insomnia, sleep disordered breathing, non-REM parasomnias (confusional wandering)
03.	Fatigue	Central fatigue (may be related to dysautonomia), peripheral fatigue.
04.	Sensory symptoms	Pain, olfactory disturbance, hyposmia, functional anosmia, visual disturbance (blurred vision, diplopia; impaired contrast-sensitivity).
05.	Autonomic dysfunction	Bladder dysfunction (urgency, frequency, nocturia), sexual dysfunction, sweating abnormalities (hyperhidrosis), orthostatic hypotension.
06.	Gastrointestinal symptoms	Dribbling of saliva, dysphagia (choking), agueusia, constipation, nausea, vomiting.
07.	Dopaminergic drug induced behavior	Hallucinations, psychosis, delusions, dopamine dysregulation syndrome, impulse control disorders.
08.	Non-motor fluctuation	Dysautonomia, cognitive/psychiatric, sensory/pain, visual blurring
09.	other symptoms	Weight loss

**Rigidity:** Rigidity is the stiffness and inflexibility of the limbs, neck and trunk. Muscles normally stretch when they move, and then relax when they are at rest. However, in Parkinson's rigidity, the muscle tone of an affected limb remains stiff and does not relax, sometimes contributing to a decreased range of motion. PD patients commonly experience tightness of the neck, shoulder and leg. A person with rigidity and bradykinesia does not swing his or her arms when walking. Rigidity can be uncomfortable or even painful.

**Postural Instability:** Patients with postural instability have lost some of the reflexes required for maintaining an upright posture, and may lean backward if jostled even slightly. Some develop a difficult tendency to sway backward when rising from a chair, standing or turning. This problem may result in a backward fall. People with balance problems may have particular difficulty when making turns or quick movements. Doctors test postural stability by using the "pulltest."

### Types of PD

On the basis of causes, PD can be classified into "Sporadic PD and Familial PD". Researchers think that mitochondrial dysfunction, oxidative stress, protein misfolding play a central role in PD pathogenesis but, the exact pathogenic mechanisms leading to selective DAN death in PD remain poorly understood and it appears to involve both genetic (familial) and environmental factors (sporadic).

### Sporadic Parkinson's Disease

Sporadic PD is a disease that is occurring randomly in a population with unknown cause. In sporadic PD, the cause is considered to be environmental although the familial factor is also present, suggesting that the pathogenesis of PD is likely to be multifactorial which may involve gene-environment interactions. The discovery of MPTP, induces pathological features of idiopathic PD by affecting the nigrostriatal system [17], pesticide (rotenone) and herbicide (paraquat), has implicated environmental toxins in the induction of sporadic PD [18,19]. Both epidemiological and experimental studies suggest that the potential involvement of specific agents such as neurotoxins (pesticides) or neuroprotective compounds (coffee and tobacco products) in the pathogenesis of nigrostriatal degeneration, further supporting a relationship between the environment and PD [20].

The studies of environmental risk factors of PD are not an easy task because interactions of environmental toxins and gene-environment may occur well before the onset of clinical symptoms since it remains undetected for many years. Moreover, neurodegenerative changes that underlie the symptoms of PD may be the result of combined effects of multiple exposures and these effects could have been compounded by increased vulnerability of the ageing nigrostriatal system to toxic injury over the years. Epidemiological and case-control studies suggest that rural living, well water drinking, use of pesticides, and certain occupations (farming, mining, and welding) are associated with an increased risk of PD [21-23]. Epidemiological studies reveal that

**Table 2:** Demonstrated neuroprotective efficacy of certain natural products and implicated biochemical and molecular pathways

Agents	Mechanism	Molecular pathways
Resveratrol	Anti-inflammation	Decrease the mRNA levels of IL-1 $\alpha$ and TNF $\alpha$ [96]; decrease the levels of COX-2 expression [97]; decrease the levels of NO, TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, MCP-1; suppress production of IL-12p40, IL-23 and C- reactive protein, and respective receptors [98]; down-regulate MPO; modulate the activity of PGC-1 $\alpha$ , Akt and NF- $\kappa$ B [99,100].
	Anti-apoptosis	Reduce the activity of caspase-3 and the level of Bax [101]; regulate DNA fragmentation and the mRNA levels and protein expression of Bax, Bcl-2, cleaved caspase-3, and cleaved ARP-1 [102]; activate sirtuin deacetylases and PPAR- $\gamma$ [103,104]
	Anti-oxidation	Diminish superoxide anion [105]; inhibit ROS (Reactive oxygen species) generation [106]; up- regulate the antioxidant status and the expression of MsrA [103]; activate PPAR- $\gamma$ , AMPK, SIRT1; raise the mRNA expression of PGC- 1 $\alpha$ 's target genes [107]
	Neurotrophic effect	Increase neurotrophic factors release in the concentration- and time- dependent manners [108]
Curcumin	Anti-inflammation	Inhibit NF- $\kappa$ B translocation [105]and AP-1 activation [109]; inhibit the protein expression of GFAP [110] and iNOS, decrease activation of astrocytes and microglia [111], reduce pro-inflammatory cytokine, alleviate loss of TH-IR fibers, protect axon [112]
	Anti-apoptosis	Reduce MMP loss, attenuate MPP(+)-induced an increase in intracellular ROS level, induce over expression of BCL-2 and antagonize MPP+-induced over expression of iNOS; [113] ease $\alpha$ S induced toxicity [114]; protect DAN axon [115]; decrease the Bax/Bcl-2 ratio[116]; reduce the accumulation of A53T $\alpha$ -syn[117]; inhibit the JUN/c-Jun pathway[118]; block MPP(+) [119]
	Anti-oxidation	Restore membrane potential, increase level of Cu-Zn superoxide dismutase, suppress ROS [105]; sustain SOD1 level [111]; reduce the levels of p-p38, cleaved caspase-3 and quinoprotein formation [121]; restore depletion of GSH levels [122], free radical scavenging [123]; inhibit oxidative stress and the mitochondrial cell death pathway [124]; activate the Nrf2/ ARE pathway [125]; reduce p53 phosphorylation [126]
	Prevent $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregation and fibrillation	Prevent $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregation and fibrillation [127]; destabilize preformed $\alpha$ S [128]; specifically binds to oligomeric intermediates [129];
	Inhibit MAO-B	Inhibit MAO-B activity[127]
	Anti-Inflammation	Suppress NO production and TNF- $\alpha$ secretion, inhibit the mRNA expressions of iNOS, TNF- $\alpha$ ,IL-1 $\beta$ , COX-2 and MMP-9, inhibited the phosphorylations of PI3K/ Akt and MAPKs and the DNA binding activities of NF- $\kappa$ B and AP-1 [130],; suppress phosphorylation and nuclear translocation of NF- $\kappa$ B/p65, phosphorylation and degradation of I $\kappa$ B and the phosphorylation of IKK;inhibit the activation of Akt and ERK1/2 [131]; reduce NO-formation and PGE2 synthesis [132]; attenuate upregulation TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-1 $\beta$ and IL-6 mRNA, and iNOS and COX-2 expression [133]
	Anti-Apoptosis	Inhibit the activation of caspase-3, reduce iNOS and NO production [134] ; increased the phosphorylation,inhibition of Bad through activation of the PI3K/Akt pathway [ 135]; Enhance theexpression of Bcl-2 protein and mRNA, reduce the expression of Bax, Bax mRNA, and iNOS, and attenuate the cleavage of caspase-3 [136]
	Anti-oxidation	Reduce the generation of ROS and cytochrome c release[134], restore mitochondrial membrane potential, increased the phosphorylation inhibition of Bad through activation of the PI3K/Akt pathway [136] decrease iron influx, inhibit IRPs; decrease DMT1-mediated ferrous iron uptake and iron-induced cell damage [137,138]
	Neurotrophin-like effects	Increase neurite outgrowth; reversed MPTP-induced cell death [139]
	Neuroprotective activity	When administered orally to mentally retarded children showed significant increase in general ability and behavior patterns [140]. It improves brain power [142,143] and decreased the levels of norepinephrine, dopamine, 5-HT, and their metabolites in the brain [141,144]
Neuroprotective activity	Is used in traditional method for epilepsy, constipation, cough, fever, clearing voice, diabetes, and mental disorders [145]; the neuroprotective effect on lipofuscinogenesis and fluorescence product in the brain of D-galactose-induced ageing accelerated mice [146,141]	
Neuroprotective activity	Treating a number of ailments like epilepsy, mental ailments, abdominal tumors, kidney and liver troubles, etc. [147]; the hydroalcoholic extract of rhizomes against middle cerebral artery occlusion (MCAO)-induced ischemia; found to have significant improvement in neurobehavioral performance associated with significant reduction in malondialdehyde levels in the cortex and increase in glutathione as well as superoxide dismutase activity in the cortex and corpus striatum in rats [146,141]	

**Table 3:** Classification of biomarkers

	Biomarker Type	Related Symptoms
1	Behavioural biomarkers	Depression [160], sexual dysfunction, altered circadian rhythm (sleep wakeful cycle), micrographia (small words), incontinence, deafness, agraphia (impaired handwriting), acalculia (difficulty solving simple calculation due to dementia) [159]
2	Sensory biomarkers	Olfactory deficit discrimination, hypoguesia deafness (loss of hearing), impaired visio-spatial and color discrimination, hypoguesia (loss of taste) [159].
3	Cognitive biomarkers	Agraphia, acalculia [159]
4	Motor biomarkers	Resting tremor, postural instability, muscular rigidity, bradykinesia [159]
5	Omics biomarkers	$\alpha$ -syn, DJ-1, miRNA [159]

exposure to rotenone and MPTP leads to PD at later stages of life. Further experimental data substantiates that rotenone is a complex I inhibitor. Therefore rotenone exposure disrupts ATP synthesis leading to the death of DAN in PD patients [24,25].

#### *Mechanisms of Environmental toxins*

Discovering of MPTP causing Parkinsonian syndrome triggered to investigate further for environmental factors as potential causes of PD. Epidemiological studies have suggested that environmental toxins are one of the major causes of sporadic PD [26]. The mechanisms by which the neurotoxins induce PD like symptoms are briefly described below.

*MPTP*: It is a metabolite of the drug heroin and is transported across the blood-brain barrier (BBB) by dopamine transporter (DAT) of plasma membrane and once it crosses the BBB, MPTP is metabolically activated to the fully oxidized 1 methyl 4-phenylpyridinium species (MPP<sup>+</sup>) which is then taken up into DAN via DAT [27,28]. After MPP<sup>+</sup> entering into DAN, it is accumulated into synaptic vesicles via the vesicular monoamine transporter (VMAT2) [29]. The ratio of DAT to VMAT2 indicates the sensitivity of DAN to toxic injury [30].

*6 Hydroxy dopamine (6 OHDA)*: 6 OHDA, catecholaminergic neurotoxin, causes severe loss of dopamine neurons within a day in mouse model of PD [31]. Inside neurons, 6 OHDA produces ROS and quinones that inactivate biological macromolecules. Till date, no LB like inclusion has been observed in the 6-OHDA model.

*Paraquat (PQ)*: One of the most commonly used herbicides in the world is PQ. The structural similarity of PQ with MPP<sup>+</sup> suggested that PQ might be dopaminergic neurotoxicant which may lead to PD. PQ is suspected to carry to the brain by neutral amino acid transporters and subsequently the cells in a sodium dependent fashion [32]. Once within cells of

the CNS, PQ acts as a redox cycling compound at the cytosolic level, which potentially leads to indirect mitochondrial toxicity [33]. Recent studies have shown that PQ induced apoptosis involves Bak protein, a pro apoptosis Bcl 2 family member [34-38].

*Rotenone (ROT)*: ROT is a crystalline isoflavone used as an insecticide. Inhibition of complex I of mitochondrial electron transport chain (METC) by ROT has been widely used to study the role of the METC in apoptosis [39,40]. The METC is the major site of ATP synthesis in eukaryotes and it also plays an important role in apoptosis [41-43]. It is now known that upon apoptotic stimulation, mitochondria release several proapoptotic regulators, such as cytochrome c [44], Smac/Diablo [45,46], endonuclease G [47], and apoptosis inducing factor [48] to the cytosol. These proapoptotic regulators will then activate cellular apoptotic programs downstream [41-43]. The release of proapoptotic regulators is further regulated by the translocation of Bcl 2 family proteins [49,50].

*Maneb (MB)*: MB, a commonly used fungicide, causes an irritant to respiratory tracts and is capable of inducing sensitization by skin contact. Mechanistically, MB can cross the BBB. Although knowledge of the mechanisms of this toxin is very limited, MB inhibits mitochondrial complex III [51]. Further, MB was shown to induce apoptosis through Bak activation, whereas combination of PQ and MB inhibits the Bak dependent pathway while potentiating apoptosis through Bak protein [52].

*Heavy metals (HM)*: HM are metals with relatively high densities, atomic weight or atomic numbers. HM such as iron, manganese, copper, lead, aluminium, zinc, etc. can affect the DAN in the SN and increase oxidative stress. Exposures to these heavy metals increase the risk of PD. Chronic exposure to high levels of manganese in manganese miner's cause accumulation of this metal in the basal ganglia, leading to tremors, rigidity and psychosis that mimic PD [53,54]. The potential role of iron and other transition elements has also been studied. The level

of ferritin in PD patients was found to be decreased. Hence iron accumulation together with decrease binding capacity may increase the risk for iron mediated toxic reactions in PD by generating the highly toxic hydroxyl radical in the presence of iron and hydrogen peroxide, leading to oxidative stress and neurodegeneration.

### ***Genetics/Familial PD***

Familial PD is caused by the mutation of genes. Familial PD cases are much less observed compared to sporadic PD cases. Mutations occur in a number of genes such as  $\alpha$ -syn [55], Parkin (PARK2)[56], PTEN-induced putative kinase 1 (PINK1) [57], leucine-rich repeat kinase 2(LRRK2) [58], DJ-1[59] and ATP13A2[60]. Among the genetic cases, autosomal dominant genes are  $\alpha$ -syn and LRRK2 and the rest are known as autosomal recessive genes. Studies of familial forms of PD suggest that  $\alpha$ -syn plays a crucial role in the development of the disease. Excess  $\alpha$ -syn gene produce extra  $\alpha$ -syn protein which damage neurons. The harm is more pronounced in DAN of SN which plays a key role in controlling normal movement in PD. Further, the identification of the mutated  $\alpha$ -syn gene causing familial PD [61] as a risk factor for sporadic disease provides a genetic context for the disease. The finding of  $\alpha$ -syn as a key component of the Lewy body[62] further links this gene to potential molecular mechanisms of PD. Studies on Parkin and PINK1 of Drosophila mutants have suggested that mitochondrial dysfunction is the major cause for the PD pathogenesis and that these two PD genes are in a common pathway with Parkin downstream of PINK1. All the known genetic mutations linked to PD are directly or indirectly implicated in mitochondrial homeostasis, energy metabolism, response to oxidative stress or proteomes functional pathways or endoplasmic reticulum stress response.

### **Therapeutic strategies**

Early nineteenth century, James Parkinson suggested venesection, specifically bloodletting from the neck, followed by vesicatories to induce blistering and inflammation of the skin [63]. Efforts were framed to decompress the medulla in order to divert blood and inflammatory pressure away from the brain and spinal cord. In the mid-1800s, Jean-Martin Charcot was also the first to suggest the use of the term "Parkinson Disease"[64] and suggested vibratory therapy for treatment of PD where he developed a replication device which provide rhythmic movement by an electrically powered "shaking chair" [65]. Other therapies includes hydrotherapy, spa treatments, light exercise, electrical incitement by faradic,

galvanic, or direct spark (franklinization) were used to stimulate weakened muscles. In PD patients, rigidity and some sensory symptoms improved, but not in tremor. For tremor, Gower used hyoscyamine, arsenic, morphia, conium (hemlock), and "Indian hemp" (cannabis) as agents for temporary decline in tremor [66]. Precisely noting on the power of cannabis and opium Gower stated: "I have several times seen a very distinct improvement for a considerable time under their use." [67]. Presently, cannabis have some dopaminergic activation properties, but use of opium affects the motor system in a generalized manner without direct or primary dopaminergic involvement [68].

### ***Levodopa***

L-3,4-dihydroxy- phenyl-L-alanine(L-dopa), a precursor of dopamine, is used in place of dopamine as dopamine cannot pass the BBB. It is administered either orally or intravenously where it gets converted to dopamine before it reaches to brain, hence it is administered with another substance called carbidopa (decarboxylase inhibitor). Addition of carbidopa decreases the amount of L-dopa that is required and may reduce some of its side effects such as nausea and vomiting by reducing the supply of free dopamine outside the brain. Carbidopa reduces the amount of needed L-dopa and delays the conversion of L-dopa into dopamine until it reaches the brain, preventing some of the side effects that often accompany L-dopa therapy. L-dopa is a very useful drug for reducing the tremors and other symptoms of PD during the early stages of the disease. Its use is associated with improved mobility, reduced disability and life expectancy of L-dopa treated patients is markedly increased. A high-protein diet can interfere with the absorption of L-dopa, so physicians restrict patients in taking protein-rich meals during their early stages of the treatment [69].

With the knowledge that L-dopa was the natural precursor to dopamine, Birkmayer received Hornykiewicz's supply of laboratory L-dopa and injected it intravenously for the first time to Parkinsonian patients in 1961. He observed that, bed-ridden patients who were unable to sit up, patients who could not stand up when seated, and patients who when standing could not start walking performed all these activities with ease after L-dopa. They walked around normally and could even run and jump [70]. L-dopa is a naturally occurring amino acid, where researchers have found L-dopa containing compounds in early medicine. Mushroom tyrosinase has been commercially used in the enzymatic synthesis of L-dopa by enzyme immobilization [71]. It lowers the production cost due

to the reusability of the enzymes. Cowage or cowitch plant (*Mucunapruriens*) is known under the name of Atmagupta in Sanskrit and contains L-dopa [72]. These developments have been based on the logical understanding of the dopamine system, metabolic pathways, and receptor populations.

#### *Limitations*

Long-term treatment leads to abnormal involuntary movements known as L-dopa-induced dyskinesia, which are uncontrolled and repetitive movement in the axis, arms, legs and oro-facial zone [73,74]. These complications occur in about 50% of L-dopa-treated patients who have received the drug for more than 5 years, in 80% of patients treated for 10 years, and in nearly all patients with young onset disease [75,76,77]. Patients have to suffer a variety of side effects; most commonly are nausea, vomiting, low blood pressure and restlessness. The repeated pulsatile stimulation of striatal dopamine receptors with chronic oral L-dopa treatment induces plastic changes in basal ganglia circuits that can lead to the development of motor response complications. A serious concern regarding L-dopa is that it causes hallucinations and psychosis after long-term use. Some patients exhibit severe dyskinesia soon after taking low doses of L-dopa and chronic treatment does more harm since L-dopa itself is a pro-oxidant which could contribute to tissue damage due to oxidative stress in PD and other neurological disorders. There are controversies in the treatment, whether it causes the motor complications or it is toxic to DAN, but it has not yet been proven and clinical trials have not clarified this situation.

#### **Deep Brain stimulation (DBS)**

DBS was first experimented in animal about 70 years ago and has been used in human subjects, mainly to treat movement disorders. It is a kind of pacemaker, a battery-operated medical device called a neurostimulator (usually implanted under the skin near the collarbone, in some cases it may be implanted lower in the chest or under the skin over the abdomen) that involves implanting of the electrodes within specific brain circuits to modulate the activity of those circuits, either to suppress pathological neuronal activity or to drive inactive output [78]. Stimulation through an electrode placed within a nuclear region will affect several neuronal cell components [79]. The target location is often choosed using structural neuroimaging, usually computed tomography or magnetic resonance imaging. This approach has been used to guide electrode placement for patients

with depression, cluster headache, and epilepsy [80]. There are many brain targets, mainly the subthalamic nucleus (STN) and also the globus pallidus interna that the DBS electrode may be placed within, which have been approved by Food and Drug Administration in 2002 for use in PD. DBS changes the rate of signal and pattern of individual neurons in the basal ganglia [81] and eliminates abnormal rhythmic oscillation between the cortex and the basal ganglia [82]. The electrical current also acts on synapses and triggers adjacent astrocytes releasing calcium and to promote neurotransmitters (adenosine and glutamate) from excitatory efferent neurons [83]

- Additionally, this has an overall increase in cerebral blood flow [84] and stimulates neurogenesis [85]. DBS depend on a number of parameters, including stimulation, physiological properties of the targeted cells, structural configuration of the electrode and the surrounding tissue, and possibly the fundamental pathophysiology of different disease states [86]. However, still it remains uncertain of how these influences lead to changes in the symptoms of a certain neurological disease. Therefore, the foundation of this therapy has been more or less observational.

#### *Limitations*

The most adverse events associated with placement of leads for DBS are infection and intracranial hemorrhage. It also includes acute or chronic neurological and neuropsychological complications such as surgery, hardware and stimulation and was found that the overall incidence of hemorrhage was 5.0%, with symptomatic hemorrhage occurring in 2.1% of patients and hemorrhage resulting in lack of permanent neurological activities or death in 1.1% [87]. Postoperative seizures have also been reported and usually occur within 48 hrs of surgery [88], with an estimated incidence of 2.4% [89]. The most common hardware complications include infections, migrations or misplacements of the electrodes, wire fractures, skin erosion and device malfunction [90], which often require device removal and a period of antibiotic treatment before consideration for device replacement [91]. Stimulation-related side effects include muscle contractions, dysarthria, ocular deviations, tremor, dyskinesia, headache, pain and paresthesia [92]. Verbal fluency is the most common cognitive adverse effect of STN DBS, caused by surgical electrode implantation rather than stimulation-induced interference [93]. Changes in medication, neuronal plasticity following DBS,

adaptation difficulties induced by the motor effects of DBS shows chronic effects mania, depression, apathy, panic, impulsivity, anxiety, hallucinations, and even suicidal thought [94]. In general, DBS is a relatively safe approach associated with low rate of side effects, which is an effective therapeutic option to assist in a multitude of otherwise treatment-resistant neurological diseases.

#### *Natural Remedies to Parkinson's Disease*

Studies have now shown that polyphenols play a pivotal role in mediating the therapeutic actions of these herbal products. Polyphenols are natural compounds with antioxidant properties, present in plants, vegetables and fruits. They represent secondary plant metabolites synthesized to defend against microbial attack, pests and harmful radiations, in addition to providing the plant with brilliant colors and fragrance. Natural polyphenols vary from simple molecules (phenolic acids) to complex polymeric forms (condensed tannins) [95]. Some of the major plant derived products suggested as therapeutic agents for PD are shown in Table 2.

#### *Stem Cell Therapy (SCT)*

SCT is the use of stem cells (SCs), undifferentiated cells of a multi-cellular organism, to treat or to prevent a disease. SCs have multilineage differentiation potential and maintain self-renewal and proliferative ability that enables the researcher to replace the degenerated neuron and enhancing the levels of dopamine through regeneration of DAN, which leads to the creation of conditions to model inherent features in the pathogenesis of PD.

At present, there are two types of grafts resources for PD: allogenic and autogenous. Allografts include fetal brain or other human embryonic tissues and human embryonic stem cell (hESC) derived DAN while autologous grafts derived from patient-specific somatic cells via in vitro induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSC) reprogramming or direct lineage conversion. DAN from fetal ventral mesencephalic tissues were the major cell replacements in the implemented clinical trials.

The development of new cell models of PD is a particularly promising area of SCT. New advances in stem-cell technology have been acquired from pure PD patient's homogeneous generation of induced DAN such as hESC-derived DAN [149,150] iPSC-derived DAN [148,149,150] and directly reprogrammed DAN [151]. This technology provides an opportunity for the cellular events under genetically defined condition to be investigated in a human context. Compared with animal models, stem-

cell models have achieved the following breakthroughs in mimicking the microenvironment of the PD cell in vitro. First, studies suggest that patient-specific derived cells still retain an epigenetic memory [152] (the topological memory) [153] and keep expressing the carrying transcriptomic disease-causing mutation memory [154,155]. Second, the isogenic cells from healthy patients were procured from patient-specific cells via a genome-editing technique, providing a method for single-factor analysis to study observed PD phenotypes caused by a certain PD-causing mutation. Third, on the basis of generation of pure lines of iDAN with genetic variants, scientists could mimic mono-factorial environmental stress-related neurodegenerative states by imposing artificial stress factors on pathological processes of PD [156,157].

#### *Limitations*

Despite many advantages of SCT, many questions and obstacles exist in the therapeutics of stem cells. The Major challenges of the clinical use of stem cells include ethical questions, tumorigenesis, immune response, and toxicity to a degree. There are many ethical issues and intense immune response in the use of ESCs. Compared with ESCs, iPSCs have lesser ethical issues and reduced immune rejection, but because of powerful pluripotency, the risk of tumor development of iPSCs is greater than that of other stem cells. Moreover, iPSCs derived from autologous PD patients may carry pathogenic gene mutations that affect the prognosis for cell-replacement therapy. To obtain a higher rate of survival and integration, the details of canonical grafting procedures need to be estimated. In spite of significant limitations of stem cell therapeutics, it throws a great promise to replenish the degenerated DAN in PD patients.

#### **Biomarkers**

National Institutes of Health (NIH) working group (2011) defined biomarker as "a characteristic that is objectively measured and evaluated as an indicator of normal biological processes, pathogenic processes, or pharmacologic responses to a therapeutic intervention". Biomarkers are tools that are used to indicate or evaluate the progress of a disease or the effects of treatment. Biomarkers facilitate early diagnosis, disease prevention, drug target identification, and drug response [158]. PD biomarkers include (1) preclinical biomarkers; and (2) clinical biomarkers [159] (Classification of biomarkers is given in Table 3). The most biomarkers could be used for diagnosis, tracking disease



progression, and development of effective treatments of PD through clinical symptoms and neuroimaging, a number of genetic and biological markers from blood and CSF may hold promise for the early diagnosis of PD.

New approaches such as transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics have been an integral part in identifying pathways that are related with dopaminergic neurodegeneration and subsequently PD. Molecular biomarkers include nucleic acid-based biomarkers such as gene mutations or polymorphisms, gene expression analysis, peptides, proteins, lipid metabolites, and other small molecules. Transcriptomics have reliably identified alterations in pathways in the *SN pars compacta* and blood of PD subjects associated with mitochondrial and proteasomal function, dopamine neurotransmission and oxidative stress. In addition, it has uncovered the axon guidance pathway as a potential contributor to dopaminergic neurodegeneration. The use of proteomics has provided a comprehensive characterization of the human midbrain, as well as the protein composition of human cerebrospinal fluid. This platform has been further utilized to identify specific proteins and pathways that are altered in the biofluids of PD compared with controls. Metabolomics-based studies of blood from PD and control patients have further uncovered the role of oxidative stress in the pathogenesis of PD [161]. It is hoped that further integration of these techniques will yield a more comprehensive understanding of PD etiology and the biological pathways that mediate neurodegeneration which may eventually assist in developing more reliable biomarkers.

### Conclusion

In spite of the efforts of biomedical researchers for two centuries little progress has been made in developing successful therapeutic strategies to PD. The critical limitation is that neuron is a post mitotic cell and by the time disease is diagnosed 60 to 70% of the neurons are degenerated. Therefore in order to develop therapeutic strategies it is important to develop methods to detect early dopaminergic neurodegeneration. Here lies the potential opportunity for biomedical researchers to take advantage of animal models and identify or characterize the strategies for early detection of PD pathology and apply this knowledge to understand the disease progression in human which is the ultimate goal of biomedical research. This will enable to work further either to delay the onset of

neurodegeneration, if not to prevent death of DAN in PD.

### Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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