

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

## Meditation as Medicine

Meditation has been practiced for a millennium. However, in recent years many people have desired a more holistic approach to medicine and disease management. The increasing acceptance of holistic medicine has led to more interest in the use of alternative or complementary therapies, such as meditation. As a result, more and more medical clinics and hospitals offer training in meditation and meditation sessions. Because regular meditation may reduce the number of symptoms experienced by patients with a wide range of illnesses and disorders, meditation is being used as primary therapy for treating certain diseases, such as panic disorder, chronic pain and depression and as adjunct therapy in a comprehensive treatment plan in the prevention of heart disease, hardening of the arteries and cancer. Meditation may also improve function or reduce symptoms of patients with neurologic disorders such as Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and epilepsy. Moreover, it has been employed as a means of improving the quality of life of people with debilitating, chronic, or terminal diseases.

In 1995, the authors of a report to the National Institutes of Health on complementary or alternative medicine reviewed 30 years of research and reports of individuals and health care providers. They concluded that meditation and related methods for the enhancement of relaxation are cost-effective ways to improve health and quality of life. Currently, University of Louisville Behavioral Research Laboratory and University of Louisville Movement Disorder Clinic are collaborating on a pilot study on the impact of Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) on Parkinson's patients and their primary caregivers. Variables examined in this study include immune function, salivary cortisol, psychophysiological functioning, disease-relevant movement and balance measures, and self-reported physical and psychological functioning. Additional recent research has highlighted the positive effects of meditation on neuroplasticity of the brain.

Beginning mid-September, HAPS will offer a meditation course for those with Parkinson's disease and/or their caregivers. The course is based on Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program. MBSR programs are taught from a non-religious perspective and non-judgmental process that focuses on incorporating mindfulness into daily life. Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist self-regulation practice that trains one's attention and awareness promoting mental well-being. Mindfulness includes awareness of bodily sensations, emotions and thoughts; it encourages living in the now by staying focused on the present. Meditation is the method that helps cultivate the mental discipline skills and environment needed to help you achieve mindfulness.

Students will learn how meditation can be used to help cope with difficulties and thrive despite the stresses of everyday life. A practice that cultivates awareness, concentration, focus and insight, meditation can be used to relax our bodies, slow down breathing, and diffuse emotions, allowing us to make insightful responses instead of emotionally charged reactions. This allows us to mindfully observe our own behavior patterns, gain insight into them, and discover how to view the world from a more compassionate, open and spiritual perspective all while finding a meaningful way to cope with daily challenges.

The six week course, led by instructor Stanley Merrill, will be held every Tuesday from 10:00 am – 11:30 am at the American Red Cross beginning September 23, 2009. Contact Kathleen Crist, LMSW at 713-626-7114 or [crist@hapsonline.org](mailto:crist@hapsonline.org) to enroll.

# Ask the Doctor



*Cindy B. Ivanhoe, M.D.  
Chief Medical Officer Mentis Neurorehabilitation  
Associate Professor Baylor College of Medicine,  
University of Texas Department of  
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Alliance*



## **Q. How is Botox used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease?**

**A.** Everyone has heard of the uses of “Botox” for hyperactive glabellar lines (translation: wrinkles) but most people in the general public do not realize that botulinum toxin has been used for neurologic, therapeutic indications for a far greater number of years. There are many aspects of Parkinson Disease/Parkinsonism that can benefit from the use of botulinum toxin.

It is important for the person with Parkinson's and the physician to be clear about the goals of treatment. Everyone will be more satisfied with the result if the goals of injection are defined first and have meaning for the person being treated. There are 3 forms of botulinum toxin that have somewhat different properties. The trade names are Botox, Dysport and Myobloc. Their dosing and mechanisms of action vary.

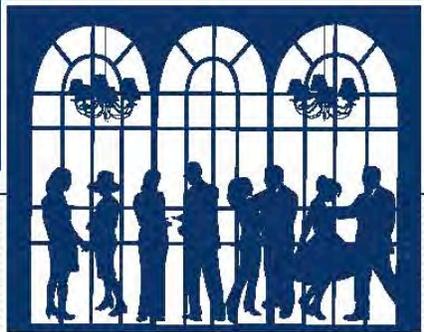
Clinically, there is evidence to support the use of botulinum toxin for tremor, dystonia (abnormal postures), blepharospasm (involuntary eye closing), and lid apraxia (difficulty opening your eyes), sialorrhea (excessive saliva production) and gait disturbances. There can be improvement in everyday functioning with injections and sometimes, decrease the use of other medications.

Botulinum toxin is a useful intervention to maximize function. The potential risks are low and the potential benefits, meaningful. When someone is having difficulty walking or with postural reflexes, injections that help maintain range at the ankles, or improve the positioning of the foot and ankle can translate into a greater sense of security when walking or dancing. If orthotics/braces are helpful in providing stability when walking, botulinum toxin injections can help improve comfort and effectiveness of the brace.

Side effects of botulinum toxin injections are generally mild and short lived. They reflect potential weakness in the areas injected. For example, if someone is injected for difficulty with their eyes opening or closing, there is a possibility that they can develop temporary difficulty opening the eyelid. This is called “ptosis.” Injections in the neck area for dystonia, can lead to difficulties with swallowing, or dysphagia, or unmask difficulties that may have been there before. Other potential side effects include pain or discomfort during the injection, bleeding at the injection site at the time of procedure and short-lived flu like symptoms. Effectiveness of treatment can vary with severity of the problem, injection technique, muscle selection, dose, goals and the use adjunctive therapies, such as speech, occupational and physical therapy.

### **Take home points**

Identify the goals of injection with your treating physician. Combine injections with appropriate therapies, as indicated. Know which toxin you are receiving. Realize that we are treating the symptoms, not the disease.



Houston Area  
Parkinson Society  
Annual Awards Event 2009

PARTY *for*  
PARKINSON'S

*Celebrating thirty-five years  
of improving the quality of  
life for individuals with  
Parkinson's disease.*

# Save The Date

## Sunday, 10.04.09

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6 p.m. at the Bayou Club

Honoring Houston Ballet  
and  
Baine Kerr, Sr. in memoriam

Brief awards ceremony, dinner and dancing  
to the sounds of El Orbits

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For more information call 713-313-1640  
or visit our website at [www.hapsonline.org](http://www.hapsonline.org)

## Fall Educational Program

### "DEEP BRAIN STIMULATION: IS IT FOR YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONE?"

**Saturday, Nov. 14th 8:30 am - 1:30 pm**

United Way Building 50 Waugh Drive



This free program is sponsored by the Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Center (PADRECC) at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, and the Houston Area Parkinson's Society (HAPS).

Join with others interested in learning more about this surgical treatment for Parkinson's disease. Speakers from the medical community will share their expertise and insights about Deep Brain Stimulation. There will be opportunities for Q&A from the audience. More information will be published in the October HAPS Happenings.

For immediate questions, contact Kathleen Crist, LMSW at HAPS (713) 626-7114 or Naomi Nelson, PhD at PADRECC (713) 794-8938.

# Free Medical Equipment Waiting for a Good Home!

HAPS has the following donated medical equipment, some new and some gently used.



- |                                     |                              |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (4) Shower chairs                   | (1) Hoyer lift               |
| (1) Guard rails – new - uninstalled | (1) Hoyer lift without sling |
| (1) Wheelchair                      | (1) Rolling walker           |

If you are interested in any of these items, please call the HAPS office for more information, 713-626-7114.

## NEWLY DIAGNOSED EDUCATION PROGRAM

For those diagnosed in the last three years

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2009**  
8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

For more information call Kathleen Crist, LMSW 713-626-7114

## It Takes Two to Tango, Sometimes More!



Join our tango class and have fun while improving your balance!

Every Wednesday from 1:00 - 2:15 pm

For more information call HAPS at 713-626-7114



## EXERCISE YOUR EYES



Imagine HUGH numbers, one through nine. Move your eyeballs to "trace" the numbers. Keep your head still, but use your entire range of motion.

# CONTRIBUTIONS

Your donation is very much appreciated. Your thoughtfulness helps HAPS continue to provide much needed services to people with Parkinson's and their families.

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### *In honor of Dr. Bob Stout*

Mrs. Bob Stout

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### *In honor of Louis Bernell's Birthday*

Richard Rosenberg

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Dover

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## IN MEMORY OF

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Martha Bohacek  
Howard and Mary Green

### *In memory of Ed Stickney*

Mary Anne Collins-Stickney

### *In memory of Jack Boynton*

Mrs. Pearl Boynton

### *In memory of Al Kohut*

Theda Flournoy

### *In memory of Jack Evans*

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Diehl

### *In memory of Kay Lynn Johnson*

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### *In memory of Judith Montague*

Sally Charpiot

~ All donations are tax deductible ~

# HAPS HAPPENINGS

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HAPS does not provide diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or pharmacist with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or drug interactions.