

It's Parkinson

BY BIRNA BJARNADÓTTIR

The most important thing in one's life is good health, food and housing. We can try to ensure good health, but it is not always enough.

On a beautiful winter day walking in the capital, I met my friend for many years. We talked together and he said he had been getting the results of his doctor's research. That's Parkinson, he said. He was worried and there was sorrow in his eyes. About a year ago, I was on a long journey in a foreign country with a group of Icelanders. Among them was an elegant woman who drew my attention to how well she behaved and walked in difficult terrain. We spoke and I found out that she had a disease that she would need daily to take into account. It's Parkinson she said. Shortly after, I was told that my cousin, who has been working all his life time as carpenter, was seriously ill. It's Parkinson.

Previously, I had observed the effects of Parkinson's disease many years ago when my colleague got sick and for a long time I was not sure what disease that was. Because he was a physician and had easy access to medical research information, he was able to understand how the disease could progress and make some preparation on his life. Since then, drug treatments and technical interventions have proved successful.

AGE-Platform Europe is a non-governmental organization in Europe, working closely with the European Union and benefiting from it. Through these organizations, working groups are appointed representatives of the elderly, among others, with regard to healthy aging and aging with dignity. One of the tasks of these working groups is to support a development project related to the study of the nature and causes of Parkinson's disease. The project has been funded, and medical-educated and technologically-qualified experts in several European countries carry on with the development of the project and the research work.

The organization of senior citizens in the Nordic countries is members of AGE-Platform Europe, and they have appointed their representatives in the working groups as advisors and representatives of consumers. I have been working with these groups in recent years and have had the opportunity to learn about key innovations and emphases in the issues of elderly people in Europe. These include Parkinson's studies called i-Prognosis. Parkinson's disease is not, however, a defined aging disease. It is, however, the disease that is believed to be affecting the life of more and more young, middle-aged and elderly than any other chronic disease. The research project involves getting a user group of smartphones to approve and put up an APP into their phones, which then monitors movements, walking and sleeping habits recorded in the database. Emphasis is placed on receiving ordinary

participants as well as those diagnosed with Parkinson to participate in a comparison of results. Currently, only participants from the UK, Germany and Greece are taking part but there is a work going on finding ways that participants can also be in Iceland.

A young American actor, Michael J. Fox, was identified with Parkinson several years ago. He established a fund for research on Parkinson's disease and to raise awareness among the public and experts on this disease. His fund has also worked closely with the AGE-Platform research project.

Parkinson's Day has been held April 11th worldwide to draw attention to how it is to live with this disease. The day has also been held in Iceland and now this year with a great success under the direction of the Parkinson Association. They introduced a number of important supportive measures for those with Parkinson's and their family members. The Parkinsons organization is based on the volunteership of their members and need to seek every way to gain support from companies, companies and fundraising funds. However, they thrive primarily for the enthusiasm and interest of members of the Parkinson Association in Iceland.

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