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IN BRIEF

PARKINSON DISEASE

Could dietary flavonoids be protective against Parkinson disease?

Flavonoid-rich foods such as berries may reduce the risk of Parkinson disease (PD), new research indicates. In a prospective study involving 49,281 men and 80,336 women, those in the top quintile of dietary flavonoid intake had a 40% lower risk of developing PD over a 20–22-year period than did those in the bottom quintile. However, the relationship between flavonoid intake and PD risk was only statistically significant in men, and the authors also acknowledge that other dietary constituents might have influenced the results.

Original article Gao, X. *et al.* Habitual intake of dietary flavonoids and risk of Parkinson disease. *Neurology* **78**, 1138–1145 (2012)

NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASE

Mesenchymal stem cell therapy shows promise in multiple system atrophy

Autologous mesenchymal stem cell (MSC) therapy is associated with reduced neurological progression in patients with cerebellar-type multiple system atrophy (MSA-C), according to a randomized, placebo-controlled trial. 16 patients with probable MSA-C received intra-arterial or intravenous injections of MSCs derived from their own bone marrow, and 17 received injections of saline. Over 360 days of follow-up, patients in the MSC group showed lower rates of deterioration according to scores on the Unified MSA Rating Scale than did those in the placebo group.

Original article Lee, P. H. *et al.* A randomized trial of mesenchymal stem cells in multiple system atrophy. *Ann. Neurol.* doi:10.1002/ana.23612

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Metabolic conditions during pregnancy could be a risk factor for autism

A population-based study published in *Pediatrics* suggests that maternal metabolic conditions during pregnancy increase the risk of autism or other neurodevelopmental disorders in the offspring. The researchers found that conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity were more common among mothers of children with autism spectrum disorders or developmental delay than they were among mothers of control children. Given the rising rates of obesity in the general population, these findings could have serious implications for public health.

Original article Krakowiak, P. *et al.* Maternal metabolic conditions and risk for autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. *Pediatrics* **129**, e1121–e1128 (2012)

PARKINSON DISEASE

Ocular tremor is a characteristic of Parkinson disease

Impairment of ocular fixation is a specific feature of Parkinson disease (PD) and might aid the diagnosis of this condition, a new report reveals. In the study, oculomotor testing was performed in 112 patients with PD and 60 controls. All of the patients in the PD cohort, compared with only two of the controls, showed a persistent ocular tremor that caused fixation instability. The investigators propose that oculomotor testing could represent a useful biomarker to diagnose PD in its early stages.

Original article Gitchel, G. T. *et al.* Pervasive ocular tremor in patients with Parkinson disease. *Arch. Neurol.* doi:10.1001/archneurol.2012.70