Dive Into the Parkinson's Solutions Summit Insights Transcript

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Summit Welcome and Speaker Introduction

I am Dr. Ken Sharlin and I want to welcome you to the Parkinson's Solutions Summit. During the week of the summit, you're going to be hearing from some really terrific authorities in the area of Parkinson's disease.

Top notch researchers, clinicians, authors speak actors, people in research and development. These are just the best of the best. And I am so excited to have all of you enjoying and learning from what we have to offer.

How Parkinson's Disease Is Diagnosed

Also have a series of mini talks that I invite you to take in. These are a brief 5 to 10 minute chats on a variety of subjects, including some successful case studies that we want to share with you from Sharlin Health and Neurology Functional Medicine.

Today, I'd like to talk briefly about the diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. The diagnosis of Parkinson's disease typically involves a combination of medical history, evaluation, physical exam and the assessment of symptoms.

Now, there's no definitive test for the diagnosis of Parkinson's disease, so doctors really rely on clinical judgment and ruling out other possible causes of similar symptoms.

But here are some of the common steps and considerations in the diagnostic process. Now, we always start with a detailed medical history. The doctor is going to review your medical history, ask you about your symptoms, their progression, and any factors that may contribute to your condition.

Clinical Exam and Symptom Observation

Next is a detailed physical examination, and this is essential. We're talking about conducting a thorough neurological examination to assess your motor skills, your muscle tone and strength, your coordination, your balance, even what we call the mental status.

The doctor is going to look for specific signs associated with Parkinson's disease, and this could be tremor, rigidity or slowness of movement that we call Brady Conejo.

Now, of course, when you come in to the doctor's office, you're going to be sharing a variety of symptoms that concern you. Maybe you don't have any idea what's going on.

Maybe you have some inkling that this could be Parkinson's disease and Parkinson's in general is a very visual diagnosis. So the physician is going to be observing your symptoms and how they respond to certain movements or changes in posture.

Levodopa Response and Diagnostic Support

This can help distinguish Parkinson's disease from conditions with similar symptoms. If there is a very strong possibility that you may be suffering from Parkinson's disease, the doctor may immediately recommend medication.

This medication is called Leave a Dopa or leave a dopa carbidopa, and it can improve symptoms in people with Parkinson's disease quite significantly. In fact, if there is a significant improvement in symptoms after taking levodopa, it supports the diagnosis, the disease.

Now, I know many of you will say, well, what tests do I need to have?

Imaging and Specialized Testing

And in certain situations, additional tests may be ordered to rule out other conditions or provide further information. These tests may include a brain imaging scan, such as MRI or CT scan to evaluate brain structure and rule out other causes.

Or it might include something called a dad scan or a dopamine transporter scan, which is a nuclear medicine imaging technique that assesses dopamine activity in the brain.

In my office, it might even include a scan punch biopsy in which we look for a protein called alpha synuclein in the skin, where this protein is also found in the brain and the digestive tract, and allows us to narrow the field and confirm at least that we're dealing with a degenerative disorder that includes Parkinson's disease.

Neurology Consultation and Closing

Now, the diagnosis can be complex and may require a consultation with a neurologist such as myself or a movement disorder specialist who has expertize in recognizing this disease and in distinguishing it from other conditions.

If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms that may be indicative of Parkinson's disease, it is best to seek medical attention for proper evaluation and diagnosis.

I'm Dr. Ken Sharlin. I thank you for listening or viewing this mini talk today. This is part of the Parkinson's Solutions Summit, and I promise there is more to come.