

Several neurodegenerative diseases share symptoms with Parkinson's disease. About 15% of the people suffering from parkinsonism (who have a dopamine deficit related disease) are touched by one of those diseases. Those diseases are together called « Parkinson plus ».

Because of their common characteristics, these diseases are gathered under one category. The symptoms associated to those pathologies are bradykinesia (slowness of movements), rigidity, tremors as well as posture and gait disorders. However, each parkinsonian syndrome has its own series of symptoms associated with it. For this reason, we discern them with Parkinson's disease.

People with Parkinsonian syndrome are resistant to treatment used with Parkinson's disease. It is also the biggest clue leading to a Parkinson Plus diagnosis. These people are not sensible to levodopa, for instance. Moreover, these pathologies evolve more rapidly than Parkinson's disease. That is another big difference.

Below is a list of Parkinson Plus syndromes and associated symptoms:

- Multiple system atrophy: dizziness, fainting, constipation, erectile dysfunction, urinary retention, etc.
- Progressive supranuclear palsy: frequent falls, difficulty to move the eyes, emotional and personality changes, etc.
- Corticobasal ganglionic dégénération : apraxia (impossibility to coordinate movements), stiffness that is greater than stiffness found in Parkinson's disease, muscle twitching or spasms (usually in the hand), etc.
- Dementia with Lewy bodies : cognitive decline, hallucinations, loss of mental alertness and attention, etc.

The presence of symptoms that are not typical to Parkinson's disease at an early stage, such as eyesight disorders, early falls, important cognitive damages, hallucinations or even dementia, may indicate a parkinsonian symptom. The difference between Parkinson's disease and those other diseases is subtle and shows how important it is to see a neurologist in order to determine and identify what health problem is in question.

Unfortunately, therapeutic interventions to treat or ease symptoms in persons living with a parkinsonian syndrome are inexistent or rare. Beyond the support of your neurologist, the person may benefit from seeking help of other professionals, such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, neuropsychologists and speech therapists.

References

Guide Info-Parkinson

Medscape : Parkinson-plus syndromes www.medscape.com

Parkinson's disease foundation : Parkinsonisms and Parkinson's Plus Syndromes
http://www.pdf.org/en/parkinsonism_parkinson_syndrome

