

Stories of Hope: Parkinson's Disease



For **Bruce Wisnicki** and other Parkinson's patients, the benefit of most Parkinson's medications might be summed up with the bromide: "This too shall pass."

Because of the degenerative nature of the disease that depletes the dopamine producing brain cells, medications to control symptoms eventually lose their punch.

"I'm one of the lucky ones," Wisnicki says. "I have the resources to have the finest care available." And, he adds, he's been able to participate in many clinical trials for drugs that help control his disease.

"Here's the catch. I have been on these drugs for many years. Over time they become much less effective." Even when he's doing well, Wisnicki, a Los Angeles resident, deals with the exaggerated, jerky movements that accompany the disease and its treatment.

"I spend half my day functioning and half my day trying to function," he said. He was first diagnosed with Parkinson's disease more than 10 years ago, when his two children were still toddlers.

"Parkinson's is one of those diseases that teach us how much we really don't know," he said. "I hope you can find a cure so millions more people do not have to wait."

In October 2019 the CIRM Board approved funding for a Phase 1 clinical trial led by Dr. Krystof Bankiewicz of Brain Neuropathy Bio. This trial is using a gene therapy approach to promote the production of a protein called GDNF, which is best known for its ability to protect dopaminergic neurons, the kind of cell damaged by Parkinson's Disease. The approach seeks to increase dopamine production in the brain, alleviating PD symptoms and potentially slowing down the disease progress.

- Watch the Spotlight on Parkinson's Disease talks
- Learn more about CIRM funding for Parkinson's disease research

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