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New hope for Parkinson's sufferers

Scientists have made a breakthrough in gene therapy which could revolutionise the treatment of Parkinson's disease for Scotland's 10,000 sufferers.

Unlike current treatments, the new therapy would tackle the progression of the disease, rather than just alleviating the symptoms.



Celebrity sufferers of Parkinson's such as Mohammed Ali and Hollywood actor Michael J. Fox have raised awareness of the debilitating illness. Parkinson's Disease is a chronic and currently incurable condition which affects the cells in the brain which control movement. Symptoms vary from shaking and muscle stiffness to problems with talking and writing.

Gene therapy is a new approach which treats the disease itself, rather than just the symptoms - changing the actual make-up of the affected part of the brain.

David McNiven of the Parkinson's Disease Society said: "So far the results are really very exciting. Much of the work is presently done on animals but it's clearly demonstrating a slowing down of death of nerve cells and the ability to regrow nerve cells. Hopefully in a few years time, when the study is carried out on humans it will benefit Parkinson's Disease patients in the future."

This breakthrough brings new hope to the 10,000 sufferers in Scotland and the thousands more who live with the disease as carers and family members. Parkinson's awareness week runs until Sunday.

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