

Taking risks can cut rate of Parkinson's disease

PEOPLE who are more likely to take risks in life appear to have lower rates of Parkinson's disease, research suggested today.

Parkinson's is a degenerative neurological disorder which becomes more common in older age, but its causes remain unclear.

A study by researchers in the UK, Australia and Holland, looked at the possible relationship of impulsive, sensation-seeking traits and Parkinson's.

They also looked at links with smoking, alcohol and caffeine intake.

The researchers quizzed 106 patients with Parkinson's disease with 106 healthy people of the same age and sex.

The report, in the *Journal of Neurology Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, found people with the disease scored lower on sensation-seeking and risk-taking behaviour and higher on anxiety and depression compared to the other group.

The Parkinson's patients were less likely to have smoked and if they had, gave up many years earlier. They also drank less coffee and alcohol than their healthy peers.

The association between less risk-taking and sensation-seeking behaviour and higher rates of Parkinson's remained irrespective of smoking, coffee and alcohol intake.

They suggested that there may be a neurobiological link between low sensation-seeking behaviour - which may be a major part of the Parkinsonian personality - and the supposed protective effect of smoking and coffee drinking.

This is because people with Parkinson's tend to spurn openly hedonistic activity, while

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being scrupulous, socially withdrawn and disinclined to take risks.

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