



Parkinson's May Have Links to Certain Cancers, Study Suggests

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Genealogical data shows higher odds for melanoma, prostate cancer



People with Parkinson's disease appear to be at increased risk for melanoma and prostate cancer, and this greater risk may extend to their close and distant relatives, a new study suggests.

University of Utah School of Medicine researchers discovered the possible connection after analyzing data from the Utah Population Database (UPDB), which contains birth, death and family relationship data for more than 2.2 million people. Some of the records extend back over 15 generations.

The database is also linked with the Utah Cancer Registry and Utah death certificates dating back to 1904.

For this study, the researchers looked at nearly 3,000 people with at least three generations of genealogical data who had died of Parkinson's disease. The risk of prostate cancer and melanoma was much higher than expected in this group of people, and an increased risk was also seen in their first-, second-, and third-degree relatives.

"In our study, we not only identified an increased risk for prostate cancer and melanoma among individuals with Parkinson's disease and their relatives, but also established a reciprocal risk for Parkinson's disease among individuals with these two cancers and their relatives," co-author Dr. Stefan-M Pulst, professor and chair of the department of neurology, explained in a university news release. "Collectively, these data strongly support a genetic association between Parkinson's disease and both prostate cancer and melanoma."

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The data might also highlight new avenues of research, the authors added.



"Our findings point to the existence of underlying pathophysiologic changes that are common to Parkinson's disease, prostate cancer, and melanoma," co-author Lisa Cannon-Albright, professor of internal medicine and division chief of epidemiology, pointed out in the news release. "Exploring the precise genetic links among these diseases could improve our understanding of Parkinson's disease and influence strategies for prostate and skin cancer screening."

The study is slated to be presented this week at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Neurology in Honolulu. Experts note that research presented at medical meetings has not undergone the rigorous peer review of studies published in reputable journals, and should be considered preliminary.

More information

- The U.S. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has more about [Parkinson's disease](#).

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