

**UTTLESFORD SUPPORT GROUP**  
**NEWSLETTER/INFORMATION SHEET April–May 2021**  
[www.parkinsonsuttlesford.org.uk](http://www.parkinsonsuttlesford.org.uk)

*One thing we do well here in Uttlesford is grow daffodils! This wonderful display in Saffron Walden appeared on the BBC's weather reports. Let's hope they are a sign of the return of normal life and better things to come.*



### **YOUR LOCAL GROUP**

By now our members should have been vaccinated against Covid-19. Some will even have had their second jab! How was the experience for you? Let others in the group hear how you are getting on.

While we are not yet out of the pandemic wood, progress *is* being made at long last. Though we can't predict exactly when, we can now reasonably expect to be able restart group events before too long – in the Autumn perhaps? During what's left of this enforced pause in our activities, it's a good time to think about what sort of group everyone wants to have. How would *you* like to see things organised in future? What sort of events would you like to have, and what do you think you might be able to contribute towards our activities? Do please get in touch with someone on the committee (contact details at the end of this newsletter) to share your ideas.

### **PARKINSON'S UK**

It's a good idea to make regular visits to the Parkinson's UK website: [www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk). Not only is this a source of practical advice (see the [information and support](#) pages) but there are some fascinating accounts of the research studies currently backed by P-UK. These include the following.

- P-UK wants to understand more about what support the carers of people with Parkinson's are getting and their experiences with the health and social care system. To do this, it is conducting a survey. Details [here](#).
- Improved testing, to pick up Parkinson's earlier and monitor its progress, could play a major role in improving the management of the condition. A [University of Manchester study](#), partly funded by P-UK has been hailed as a 'breakthrough' and has featured widely in the media in recent weeks. It works by analysing compounds found in sebum, the oily substance that coats and protects the skin.
- [Research at the University of Sheffield](#), supported by P-UK aims to develop a drug to protect dopamine-producing brain cells. This will involve studying chemicals that seem to have the property of restoring the energy producing structures (mitochondria) within the cells.
- There was disappointment two years ago when a study looking at boosting levels of GDF (a naturally occurring protein in the brain) produced inconclusive results. However, P-UK is

convinced that further investigation of this approach would be worthwhile. A new company is being set up with the intention of launching a [new clinical trial](#).

## OTHER RESEARCH

- Here at the Uttlesford Support Group, we always keep a look out for new studies on the use of *exercise* to help hold Parkinson's symptoms in check. It has been interesting to read about new findings from the USA, where scientists compared [the benefits of golf](#) with those of tai chi. (Up till now, tai chi has been regarded as the best form of exercise for improving balance and preventing falls.) Working with a small group of patients, the researchers concluded that golf was slightly more beneficial than tai chi. Perhaps more importantly, they found that those who did golf said they were more likely to continue with the activity after the study was complete than was the case for those doing tai chi. As one of the research team says, 'Our finding that golfers were much more likely to continue with their sport is exciting because it doesn't matter how beneficial an exercise is on paper if people don't actually do it!'
- A company set up by [Imperial College](#), London will shortly be launching a non-invasive medical device worn on the chest that uses controlled vibration to offer relief and improvement to a wide range of physical symptoms of Parkinson's disease. It is claimed to be able help patients walk, move their hands and use tools more quickly and easily.
- Reports on new research (and other Parkinson's news stories) are freely available on the US website <https://parkinsonsnewstoday.com>. Recent articles have included the following.
  - Some medications currently used to treat enlarged prostate (in particular the drugs known as [alpha-blockers](#)) might lower the risk of Parkinson's disease. Men with prostate problems taking alpha-blockers are less likely to develop Parkinson's than those on other treatments. What is needed, however, is a clinical trial to evaluate this theory.
  - It is established that stress can worsen Parkinson's symptoms, but for everyone reducing stress levels is easier said than done! New research confirms that stress is a problem and indicates that [mindfulness](#) could be useful for people with Parkinson's.
  - Other articles give useful tips for those who find that their Parkinson's is giving them problems with [speaking](#) and those who have difficulty [sleeping](#).

## BOXING CLEVER?

And finally a [news story from Turkey](#) was picked up by several international newspapers. A Belgian lady of 75, resident in the Mediterranean province of Antalya, has taken up non-contact boxing to help control her Parkinson's and she is convinced it has been a big help. But this shouldn't come as a surprise; for some years there have been classes in '[Parkinson's Boxing](#)' (also known as [Rock Steady Boxing](#)) in the USA. The irony of this is that ordinary boxing is just about the worst activity that anyone could take up in terms of brain damage! How strange that boxing moves (other than the actual business of bashing each other on the head) seem to help against neurological conditions.

**Parkinson's UK membership: if you are not already a member, we encourage you to join. The fee is £4 a year, with an extra £6 a year to join the Uttlesford Support Group.**

*PARKINSON'S NURSE COVERING UTTLESFORD: Vivienne Kavanagh 01279 621924 or 07778 934669. Viv does not offer clinic sessions, but she is available to give advice over the phone.*

*LOCAL ADVISER: Angela Nullmeyers 0344 225 3707. If you are not successful in attempting to reach Angela, then please contact the national helpline on 0808 8000303.*

*UTTLESFORD COMMITTEE: Chair, Simon Russell (01799 524638); Secretary, Judy Millward (01763 838742); Treasurer (**Donations**), Tony Leek, Richmond House, Mount Pleasant, Hundon, CO10 8DW (01440 786599); Joint Outings Coordinators, Sheila Bricknell (01799 219078) and Mary Woolhouse (01799 530155); Representing Dunmow members, Val McGregor (01371 870296); Membership & Welfare Officer, Janet Crofts (01223 893619); Fundraising Officer, Kate Riley (01799 530350); Speaker organiser: Pat Lodge (01799 500255); Newsletter Editor, Paul Chinnock (01799 522570).*