CURE PARKINSON'S

Spring Research Update Meeting

Theme: Targeting inflammation to slow Parkinson's progression

Meeting agenda

2pm	**Welcome and opening remarks** Helen Matthews, CEO, Cure Parkinson's
2:05pm	**Introduction: Cure Parkinson's Research Update (with Q&A)** Dr Simon Stott, Director of Research, Cure Parkinson's
2:30pm	**Carnosic acid as a potential treatment for Parkinson's (with Q&A)** Dr Sinéad O'Sullivan, German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE)
3:15pm	**Tea and coffee break** with a chance to learn more about research opportunities at our interactive information tables
3:45pm	**Targeting inflammation in Parkinson's: phase 2 trials of azathioprine and dapansutrile (with Q&A)** Dr Caroline Williams-Gray, University of Cambridge
4:30pm	**Panel discussion: Research bias in clinical trials - Why diversity and inclusion matter** Richelle Flanagan, Parkinson's advocate Jagdeep Aujla, Parkinson's advocate Dr Julia Greenland, Addenbrooke's Hospital Chair: Dr Caroline Williams-Gray, University of Cambridge
5pm	**Meeting ends** Food and drinks reception

SCAN TO RE-WATCH

Missed the meeting or want to watch again?

Scan the QR code to re-watch the presentations.

Information tables

Before the meeting and during the break there will be interactive information tables from a variety of study teams and charities where you can find out about opportunities to get involved in Parkinson's research.

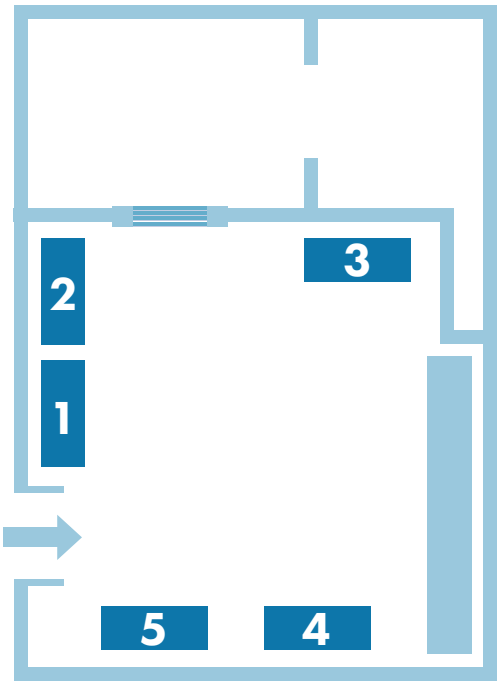

TABLE LOCATIONS

1 - Cure Parkinson's

2 - EJS ACT-PD

3 - Parkinson's UK & SpotlightYOPD

4 - PD Frontline

5 - East London Parkinson's Disease (ELPD) Project

The tables can be found in the room adjacent to the reception space. Bathrooms can be found downstairs, or an accessible toilet is available on the first floor across from the stairwell.

Thank you for attending today's meeting. Everything we do at Cure Parkinson's is to move us closer to our goal, of finding new treatments to slow, stop or reverse the progression of Parkinson's. With our supporters we firmly believe a cure is possible.

If you can help us, or if you would like to get involved in our shared mission, please call us on +(0)20 7487 3892, visit our website at **cureparkinsons.org.uk/donate** or scan the QR code.

SCAN TO DONATE

Theme: Inflammation and Parkinson's

What is inflammation?

The immune system plays a vital role in maintaining our wellbeing by identifying and eliminating harmful substances, such as viruses. Inflammation is an important part of an immune response – it is often one of the first steps and aims to protect and heal damaged cells and tissues. This process is usually harmless and subsides over time; however, long-term inflammation can cause issues as immune cells begin to target nearby healthy cells.

Why is inflammation important for Parkinson's?

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that prolonged inflammation in the brain, called neuroinflammation, is common in people with Parkinson's and may contribute to the loss of nerve cells over time. Additionally, studies have shown that people with higher levels of inflammation markers in the blood experience a faster progression of Parkinson's symptoms. These findings have led researchers to examine if therapies that target neuroinflammation could slow Parkinson's progression.

To learn more about this topic, re-watch our webinar where a panel of experts discuss inflammation and its role in Parkinson's. This webinar was held in partnership with the University of Edinburgh and the Journal of Parkinson's Disease, and chaired by Professor Tilo Kunath.

SCAN TO RE-WATCH

Presentation 1

Introduction: Cure Parkinson's Research Update (with Q&A)
Dr Simon Stott, Director of Research, Cure Parkinson's

Presentation summary

Dr Simon Stott, Director of Research at Cure Parkinson's, will start the meeting with an update on some of our funded research projects, as well as recent progress in the wider field of Parkinson's research.

Presentation 2

Carnosic acid as a potential treatment for Parkinson's (with Q&A)
Dr Sinéad O'Sullivan, German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE)

Speaker bio

Dr. Sinéad O'Sullivan is a Principal Investigator at the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (DZNE) in Bonn, Germany, where her research focuses on neurodegeneration, alpha-synuclein pathology, and mitochondrial dysfunction in Parkinson's disease.

Presentation summary

In this presentation, Dr Sinéad O'Sullivan will give an update on her ongoing preclinical study of carnosic acid, in collaboration with Professor Donato Di Monte. Carnosic acid is a naturally occurring compound found in rosemary and sage that is known for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Although there has been some research to suggest that carnosic acid is neuroprotective, additional evidence of how it performs in specific models of Parkinson's is needed before it is ready for clinical trial.

Here, the researchers are looking at the effects of carnosic acid on several drivers of Parkinson's progression. This includes oxidative stress (imbalance of toxic molecules), inflammation, energy production, and build-up of the protein alpha-synuclein - a hallmark of Parkinson's.

Key takeaways

- Carnosic acid is a compound found in sage and rosemary that is known for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.
- The aim of this study is to acquire the evidence needed to determine whether carnosic acid should be progressed into clinical trial.
- Initial findings indicate a positive effect of carnosic acid on several biological markers of Parkinson's, with some variation in response based on gender.

Presentation 3

Targeting inflammation in Parkinson's: phase 2 trials of azathioprine and dapansutrile (with Q&A) Dr Caroline Williams-Gray, University of Cambridge

Speaker bio

Dr Caroline Williams-Gray is a Principal Research Associate in the Department of Clinical Neurosciences at the University of Cambridge, and an honorary consultant neurologist at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Trust and The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust, Harlow.

Presentation summary

In this presentation, Dr Caroline Williams-Gray will discuss the recent results of the phase 2 trial of azathioprine (AZA-PD), an immunosuppressive medication. Cure Parkinson's funded a sub-study of this trial which aimed to better understand azathioprine's mechanism of action, or how the drug interacts with the body. This trial involved 66 people with early-stage Parkinson's taking azathioprine or a placebo (dummy drug) for 12 months. The researchers aimed to determine if azathioprine can "correct" the Parkinson's immune profile and slow progression by suppressing immune activity in the brain and body.

Although the trial did not meet its primary endpoint, many participants showed some improvements in motor symptoms and certain sub-groups had a stronger response to the treatment. Additionally, as a proof-of-concept study, AZA-PD has laid the groundwork for future trials of therapies targeting the immune system, including the ongoing phase 2 trial of the novel anti-inflammatory drug dapansutrile, called DAPA-PD.

Key takeaways

- AZA-PD was a phase 2 clinical trial of azathioprine, an immunosuppressive medication. The trial aimed to assess whether azathioprine could rescue immune function in people with Parkinson's and improve motor symptoms.
- Although the trial did not meet its primary endpoint, many participants did show improvements in motor symptoms. Additionally, there was a greater beneficial effect in some sub-groups of participants, such as in women.
- Importantly, AZA-PD has shown that clinical trials for Parkinson's involving drugs targeting the immune system are safe and feasible. This trial has set the stage for future work, including the ongoing phase 2 trial of dapansutrile (DAPA-PD).

SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE

Panel discussion

Research bias in clinical trials: Why diversity and inclusion matters
Chair: Dr Caroline Williams-Gray, University of Cambridge

Speaker bios

Richelle Flanagan is a World Parkinson's Congress Ambassador Alumni, co-founder of the Women's Parkinson's Project and My Moves Matter (a self-management digital app for people with Parkinson's), and a registered dietitian based in Ireland. As someone who has lived with Parkinson's for the past 10 years, Richelle is passionate about advocating and raising awareness for the unmet needs of women with Parkinson's.

Jagdeep Aujla is a Parkinson's advocate diagnosed in 2021. An accredited non-contact boxing and PWR! instructor, Jagdeep supports Parkinson's communities in the UK and internationally, speaks widely to reduce stigma, and strengthens patient–researcher partnerships as an EFNA CAB Alumni member and UK Ambassador for the World Parkinson's Conference 2026.

Dr Julia Greenland is a neurology registrar working in Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, UK since 2016. She completed her PhD in 2024, which explored the role of the immune system in Parkinson's. She was the sub-investigator of AZA-PD, a clinical trial of azathioprine in early Parkinson's, and was involved in the design, set-up, running and analysis of this trial.

Panel summary

Increasing representation in Parkinson's research is an ongoing challenge, and one that becomes more vital as we continue to improve our understanding of Parkinson's biology. Several recent trials, including AZA-PD, have demonstrated that participant response can differ depending on factors like gender, ethnicity, and genetics, calling for researchers to better stratify their participant population to identify which groups respond best. This not only increases the likelihood of success of a trial but also has implications for clinical care.

This panel session will explore why diversity is important in research, our current knowledge on how different factors can affect patient responses, and how we can improve representation through the lens of both researchers and people with Parkinson's.

Notes

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