

## Neurodegenerative Disorders: James Parkinson's Essay on the Shaking Palsy

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James Parkinson (1755–1824) is considered the father of modern paleontology and a pioneer in geology, pediatrics, child welfare, and physical chemistry.<sup>1</sup> However, in our field, he is best known for the disorder that bears his name. Parkinson's disease is a prototypical neuropsychiatric disorder that affects multiple systems regulating motor function, mood, perception, and cognition.<sup>2</sup> Parkinson's original description of the disorder, reprinted here, was published in 1817 as a short monograph in London.<sup>3</sup>

Parkinson was an astute observer whose report contains observations from three patients he saw in his clinic as well as three individuals he observed on city streets. Much of the description of the longitudinal course of the illness was derived from his observations

of a single case (Case I). His original report has clear descriptions of resting tremor, rigidity, and disturbances in gait and posture. He speculated that the pathology of the disorder would be localized to the medulla. He appealed for future anatomic studies to examine the neural substrate of the disorder.

For fifty years after publication, there was little attention paid to this report.<sup>4</sup> In 1861, Charcot and colleagues at the Salpêtrière further distinguished the disorder from other neurologic disorders and were first to use the term "Parkinson's disease."<sup>5</sup>

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### References

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