

## Leaders of the Vegan Movement Develop Parkinson's: Case Studies

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**Herbert Shelton (1895 - 1985)** a naturopath and chiropractor and the influential founder of the American Natural Hygiene Society and Nature Cure movement in America and prolific health writer advocated a natural food vegetarian diet of mostly raw fruits, vegetables and nuts. I read all of his highly motivating books, newsletters and writings in my teens. He lived in Texas, was physically fit, grew lots of his own food and ate carefully and fasted periodically. Of course he did not get cancer, he did not get heart disease, but he died of Parkinson's disease and was so severely affected by the age of 78 that even walking was difficult. In 1973 when I met him he was already severely hunched over and had a difficult time walking and caring for himself. Though he lived many years with this significant disability, the quality of his later years was extremely poor.

**Prominent Vegetarian and Health Advocate** - this leader in the natural health movement and a personal friend to me also suffered from and eventually died from a fall related to his Parkinson's disease. During his young adult life he embarked on the path of healthy living and vegetarianism. A follower of Shelton's works, he operated a large health food store, one of the first to sell organic fruits and vegetables in America; he became a leader in the health food industry. Of course he was not at risk of cancer or heart disease with his excellent diet, but he developed Parkinson's which limited the quality of his later years.

When he was developing his Parkinsonian tremors, I ordered blood tests and was shocked to see his blood results showing almost a **zero** DHA level on his fatty acid test, in spite of adequate ALA consumption from nuts and seeds eaten daily. I had never seen a DHA level that low before. Since that time I have drawn DHA blood levels on other patients with Parkinson's and also found very low DHA levels.

Was it a coincidence, that these leaders in the natural food, vegetarian movement, who ate a very healthy vegan diet and no junk food would both develop Parkinson's? I thought to myself--could it be that deficiencies in DHA predispose one to Parkinson's? Do men have worse ability to convert short chain omega-3 into long chain DHA? Is that why Parkinson's affects more men than women? Is there evidence to suggest that DHA deficiencies lead to later life neurologic problems? Are there primate studies to show DHA deficiencies in monkeys leads to Parkinson's? The answer to all of these questions is a resounding, yes.

More than 1 million Americans suffer from Parkinson's Disease (PD), a neurodegenerative disease that is clinically characterized by resting tremor, muscular rigidity, gait problems and impaired ability to initiate movements. Recent scientific findings show diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids, in particular DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), have a protective effect on this type of neurodegenerative disease. Studies in animals clearly show that supplementation of DHA can alter brain DHA concentrations and thereby modify brain functions leading to reduced risk of neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.<sup>1</sup>

A recent study examined mice which were exposed to two diets; one group was fed a diet with DHA and other omega-3 fatty acids; while the other group was given ordinary food, lacking DHA. After a period of time they were given a dose of a chemical that causes the same damage to the brain as

Parkinson's disease. The mice on the DHA diet seemed to be immune to the effects of the chemical, whereas the mice that ate ordinary food developed symptoms of the disease.

According to the researchers, among the mice that had been given omega-3 supplementation - in particular DHA - omega-3 fatty acids replaced the omega-6 fatty acids in their brains. Due to the fact that concentrations of other omega-3s (LNA and EPA) had maintained levels in both groups of mice, the researchers suggested that the protective effect against Parkinson's indeed came from DHA.<sup>2</sup>

Another conclusion drawn from this finding is that a brain containing a lot of omega-6 fatty acids may create a fertile ground for developing Parkinson's disease. These fatty acids, are abundant in foods rich in either vegetable oil or animal fat, which we already know contribute negatively to our health.

Another study observed the effect of DHA on monkeys treated with MPTP, a drug that induces Parkinson's like symptoms, and the results suggested that DHA can reduce the severity of, or delay the development of these drug-induced symptoms and therefore can offer therapeutic benefits in the treatment of Parkinson's.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, this research provides evidence that DHA deficiencies can leave us vulnerable to developing diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. If you are a nutitarian, flexitarian, vegan, or vegetarian and you are not taking DHA or confirming your levels are adequate with blood work you are being negligent, and potentially increasing your risk of such a disease in later life. All the good efforts on proper nutrition can be undone with one deficiency such as Vitamin D, B12, or DHA. I see this every week in my practice.

### **History Repeats Itself**

Some authors, doctors and leaders of the vegan movement today are heavily biased towards the idea of not needing these supplements. They simply give inadequate nutritional advice and in spite of all the science they still pooh-poo taking long-chain omega-3 DHA. They are risking the quality of their own lives and that of their followers.

Likewise, I have seen so many vegan-promoting doctors and authors negate the need for taking B12, as well as dismiss the need to take vitamin D, stating minimal sunshine is enough. They also deny the need for omega-3 supplementation. There is so much scientific literature available today pointing to the contrary, however, this irresponsible information keeps radiating from the podium of lecture halls.

It reminds me of all the statements in the past, that the need for B12 was exaggerated and that the small amount of bacteria on organic produce or in seaweed was sufficient.

**TC Fry** (1926 - 1996)- another long-term Natural Hygienist, raw foodist, vegetarian-fruitarian, advocated you did not need supplements as food contained all that we need. He died of an atherosclerotic-related embolism at the age of 70. I saw his hospital record at his death and reviewed his blood work drawn immediately prior to his death. It was quite revealing. He had severe B12, deficiency, so long-standing that his B12 levels were almost undetectable and the lowest I have ever seen. It is kind of interesting reading internet interpretations of why he died, such as "did not practice what he preached," "cheated on his diet," "too much sex," "ozone treatments for his vascular disease". He died prematurely simply because long-standing B12 deficiency leads to extremely high homocysteine levels, which can cause intra-vascular

inflammation and cardiovascular disease.

I have seen this over and over again in vegans not supplementing with B12. I even had a patient with extremely severe hyper-homocysteinemia and vascular disease who flew in to see me from Scandinavia. When I diagnosed the problem and discussed how to solve it, she still refused to take the B12 supplements, stating that Dr. Shelton and Dr. Vetrano said that nature provided us with all that we need in natural plant foods. She flew home angry that I disagreed. She died soon after.

Don't be fooled into thinking that by merely eating right you are doing all you can do to protect your health. People must be made aware that by neglecting to take the supplements that are essential to assuring nutritional excellence, they are putting themselves in harm's way. Specifically, not taking DHA, B12 and vitamin D can be potentially dangerous and even life threatening.

*[Dr. Fuhrman's DHA Purity](#) is a pure, fresh, all vegan, concentrated liquid. This DHA is derived from algae grown under sanitary laboratory conditions.*

<sup>1</sup>Calon F ; Cole G Neuroprotective action of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids against neurodegenerative diseases: evidence from animal studies. Prostaglandins Leukot Essent Fatty Acids. 2007; 77(5-6):287-93

<sup>2</sup>M. Bousquet, M. Saint-Pierre, C. Julien , N. Salem, Jr., F. Cicchetti and F. Calon Beneficial effects of dietary omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid on toxin-induced neuronal degeneration in an animal model of Parkinson's disease The FASEB Journal. 2008;22:1213-1225.

<sup>3</sup> Samadi P ; Grégoire L ; Rouillard C ; Bédard PJ ; Di Paolo T ; Lévesque D Docosahexaenoic acid reduces levodopa-induced dyskinesias in 1-methyl-4-phenyl-1,2,3,6-tetrahydropyridine monkeys. Ann Neurol. 2006; 59(2):282-8

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