

## **Levodopa does not affect intellect in people with Parkinson's disease and dementia**

[Effect of levodopa on cognitive function in Parkinson's disease with and without dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies  
S Molloy et al JNNP December 2006]

People with Parkinson's disease run six times the risk of developing dementia as the general population. But fears that levodopa, the "gold standard" of treatment for the disease, has too many neurological and behavioural side effects have tended to curb its use in people with both conditions. But now a small UK study suggests that these fears may be unfounded.

Researchers assessed the attention span and intellectual capacity of 60 people with either dementia, a combination of dementia and Parkinson's disease, or Parkinson's disease alone before and after taking levodopa, and three months later. Standard "bedside" tests and a computer programme testing reaction times and accuracy were used to measure the effects of the treatment.

The results showed that levodopa did not compromise the intellectual capacity or behaviour of those with Parkinson's disease and dementia combined in either the short or the long term. There was some fluctuation in attention span, but this is a recognised feature of both dementia and the combination of dementia and Parkinson's disease, say the researchers. And the participants said that they felt more alert, despite this.