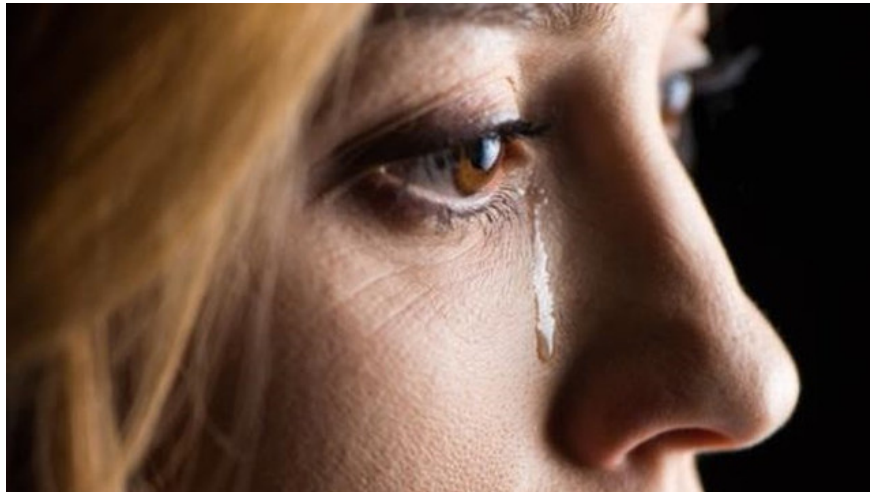


Tears may be the key to early diagnosis of Parkinson's disease

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Dr Mark Lew, a researcher, chose to study tears because of the fact that they contain proteins made by the tear glands that are involved in nerve signals. Because Parkinson's disease affects nerve function outside the brain, it is hypothesized that any neurological changes may lead to changes in protein levels in tears.



To test this theory, scientists analyzed tears from 55 people with Parkinson's disease, along with samples from 27 people who did not have the disease, but the same age and gender as the test subjects.

What they found was a lower version of a protein called alpha-synuclein in Parkinson's patients, while another version of the other alpha-synuclein algin was higher in the same group. Oligomeric alpha-synuclein is a form of alfa-synuclein that is thought to be involved in nerve damage with Parkinson's disease.

The plan now calls for scientists to study this problem on a larger experimental group, to track whether this level of protein change can detect symptoms of the disease before it occurs or is not.

"Something as simple as tears can help neurologists to distinguish between people with Parkinson's disease and those who don't get sick in non-invasive ways is interesting. And because of the process," says Lew . Parkinson's disease can start many years or decades before symptoms appear, a biological sign like this could be helpful in

diagnosing, or even treating, disease earlier. "

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