Deep Brain Stimulation Results in Dramatic Improvement for Parkinson’s Sufferers

Bassam Elannan would shake uncontrollably, and there was absolutely nothing that he could do about it.

The 55-year-old Elannan was suffering from dyskinesia, a syndrome resulting in violent body tremors commonly found in advanced Parkinson’s disease patients. The medications he took only made his twisting and jerking motions worse.

That’s when Elannan went to the Detroit Medical Center (DMC) to see Dr. Hazem Eltahawy, a neurosurgeon at Harper University Hospital and a faculty member of the Wayne State University School of Medicine.

“The condition affects the whole body,” said Dr. Eltahawy. “It can affect the upper or lower limbs to a greater extent, but it’s usually a generalized phenomenon.”

Dr. Eltahawy determined that Elannan was a good candidate for deep brain stimulation, a minimally invasive procedure that involves placing electrodes in the brain directed toward areas affected by Parkinson’s. It is done while the patient is awake and involves no pain.

Wires are attached under the skin to a pacemaker-like device placed in the upper chest. A stimulator is used to activate the battery and electronic impulses control activity in the brain. This eases the patient’s tremors.

“During the process we continuously talk to the patient and ask him to open and close his hands, speak or say numbers so that we are sure that the electrode is going in without causing any problems,” said Dr. Eltahawy.

In Elannan’s case, the results of the procedure were dramatic. Previously, he couldn’t even get up from a chair without assistance. But now, when the stimulator is turned on, he can stand up and walk without help. Elannan can keep the stimulator on at all times, if he chooses. Or, he can turn it off periodically such as when he goes to bed at night.

The key advantage to deep brain stimulation is that unlike other procedures no brain tissue is damaged and recovery is quick.

“It is very effective,” says Dr. Eltahawy. “It’s almost a breakthrough for treatment in the later stages of Parkinson’s disease.”

Certainly, it has been life-changing for Bassam Elannan.

Harper University Hospital is one of nine hospitals at the Detroit Medical Center where 270 of our doctors are ranked among America’s very best physicians. Deep brain stimulation at the DMC. Is it a healthcare revolution? Maybe. We just think it’s a better way to get better. For more information or to schedule an appointment at any DMC facility, call 1-888-DMC-2500.