Journal of Aging and Geriatric Medicine

Opinion Article A SCITECHNOL JOURNAL

Deep Brain Stimulation for Parkinson's Disease: Procedure, Effectiveness, and Risks

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Received date: 02 January, 2023, Manuscript no. AGM-23-95448;

Editor assigned date: 04 January, 2023, PreQC No. AGM-23-95448(PQ);

Reviewed date: 25 January, 2023, QC No. AGM-23-95448;

Revised date: 02 February, 2023, Manuscript No. AGM-23-95448(R);

Published date: 08 February, 2023, DOI:10.4172/2576-3946.1000145.

Description

Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) is a surgical procedure that has been used to treat various neurological disorders, including Parkinson's Disease (PD). PD is a chronic and progressive neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to control movement. It is caused by the degeneration of dopamine-producing neurons in the brain. DBS is a relatively new and highly effective treatment option for patients with advanced PD who no longer respond to medication or have severe side effects.

The procedure involves implanting small electrodes in specific areas of the brain that control movement. These electrodes are connected to a small device called a neurostimulator, which is placed under the skin near the collarbone. The neurostimulator sends electrical impulses to the brain, which help to reduce the symptoms of PD, such as tremors, stiffness, and slow movements.

The effectiveness of DBS for PD has been well-documented in clinical trials and real-world studies. Several randomized controlled trials have shown that DBS can significantly reduce motor symptoms and improve quality of life in patients with advanced PD. DBS has also been shown to reduce medication doses and improve motor function in patients with early-stage PD. In addition, DBS has been found to improve non-motor symptoms of PD, such as depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders.

However, like any surgical procedure, DBS carries certain risks. The most common risks of DBS include bleeding, infection, and neurologic complications such as stroke, seizures, or cognitive decline. There is also a risk of hardware failure or malfunction, which may require additional surgery to fix. However, the overall risk of complications from DBS is relatively low, and most patients tolerate the procedure well.

The DBS procedure is typically performed in two stages. In the first stage, the electrodes are implanted in the brain under local anesthesia. The patient is awake during the procedure to help the surgeon accurately place the electrodes in the brain. After the electrodes are implanted, the patient undergoes an MRI or CT scan to confirm their placement. The second stage involves implanting the neurostimulator under the skin and connecting it to the electrodes using wires that run under the skin.

The DBS procedure is reversible and can be adjusted to meet the patient's changing needs. The neurostimulator can be programmed to deliver different levels of electrical stimulation to the brain, depending on the patient's symptoms and response to treatment. The patient is given a handheld device that allows them to adjust the level of stimulation as needed. The patient is also closely monitored by their healthcare team to ensure that the DBS is providing the maximum benefit with minimal side effects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, DBS is a highly effective and safe treatment option for patients with advanced PD who no longer respond to medication or have severe side effects. It can significantly reduce motor symptoms and improve quality of life in patients with PD. However, like any surgical procedure, DBS carries certain risks, including bleeding, infection, and neurologic complications. Patients considering DBS should discuss the benefits and risks with their healthcare team and carefully weigh their options before deciding on the procedure.

Citation: *Daniel M (2023) Deep Brain Stimulation for Parkinson's Disease: Procedure, Effectiveness, and Risks. J Aging Geriatr Med 7:1.*