

# Alternative therapies for Parkinson's Disease

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OHSU

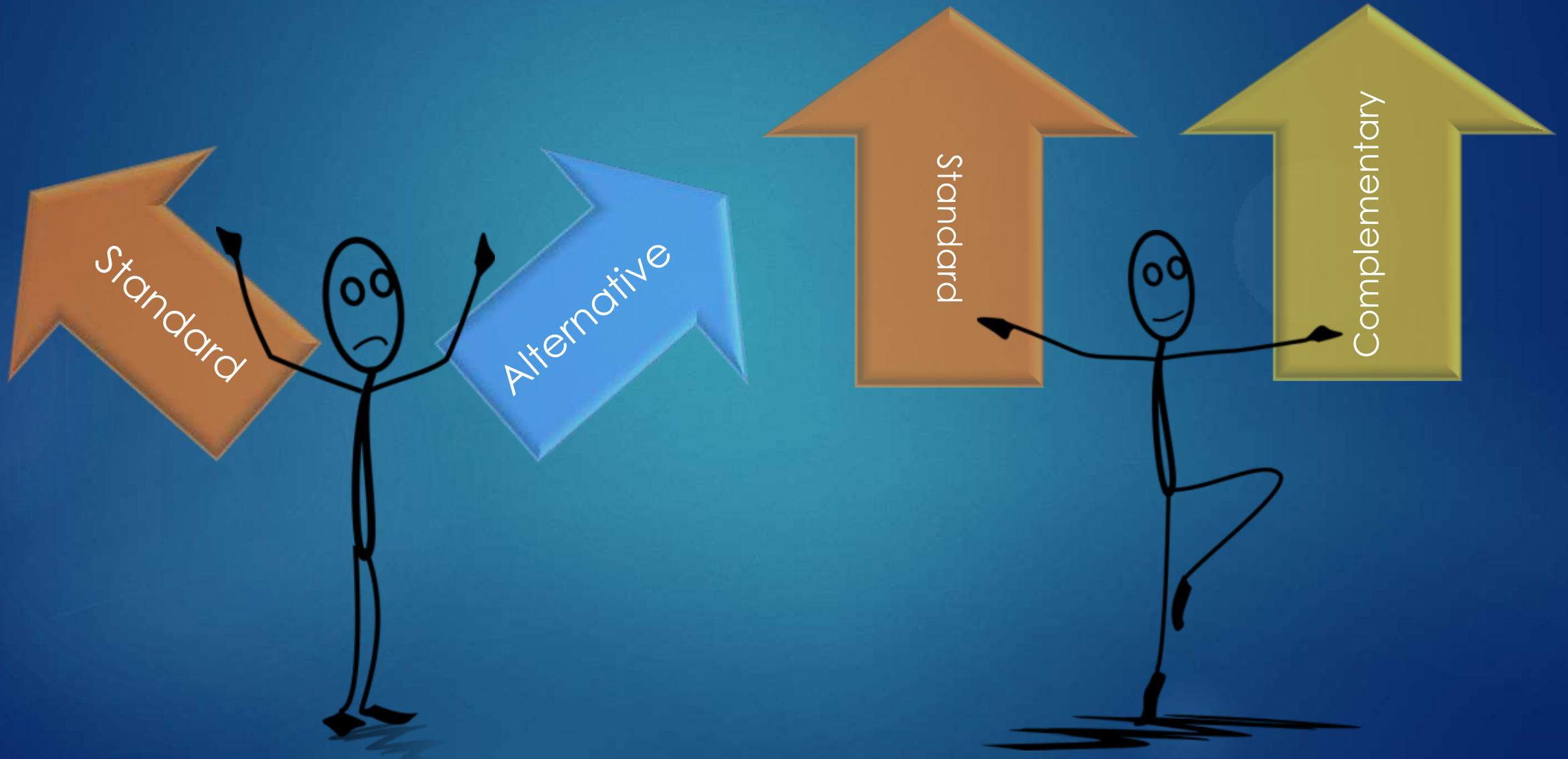
Parkinson's  
Foundation

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# Presentation Outline

- ▶ What is an alternative therapy?
- ▶ Why are people interested in alternative therapies for PD?
- ▶ **How do we evaluate new therapies or treatments?**
- ▶ Herbs, Vitamins, and Minerals
- ▶ Mind and Body practices
- ▶ Recommended resources
- ▶ Questions

# What is an “alternative therapy”?



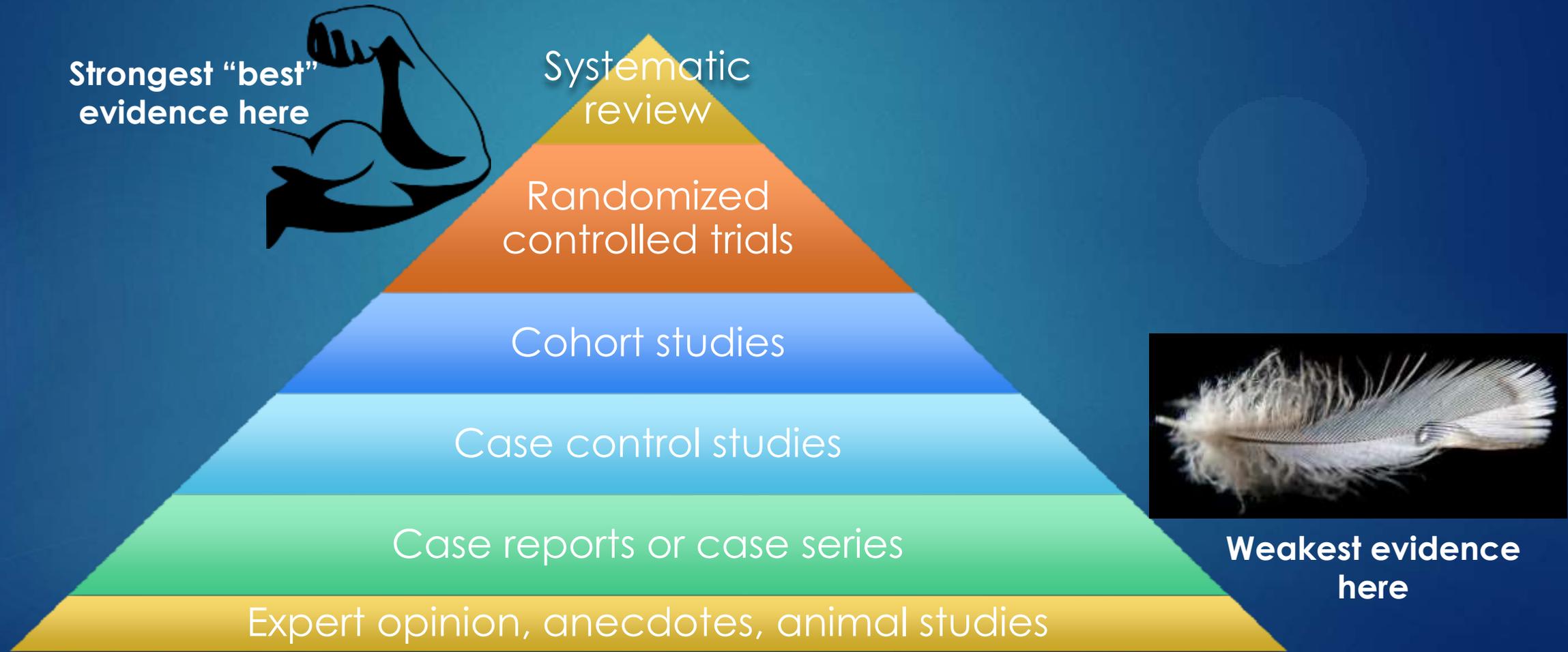
# Why are people interested in alternative therapies for Parkinson's?

- ▶ None of our current medical therapies slow down the damage
- ▶ Dopamine replacement therapies have side effects and don't treat many non-motor symptoms of Parkinson's
- ▶ Doctors tend to take a symptom-based approach instead of a holistic approach
- ▶ Patients want to feel empowered and hopeful!

# How do we evaluate treatments for Parkinson's disease?

- ▶ Evidence-based medicine: “the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of **current best evidence** in making decisions about the care of patients. It is the integration of the results from clinical research and clinical judgment.” — Gordon Guyatt

# What is the “best” evidence?



# How do we evaluate treatments for Parkinson's disease?

- ▶ According to the best evidence available:
- ▶ Is it helpful?
- ▶ Is it harmful?
- ▶ What are the costs?
- ▶ Is it “worth it” for YOU?



# Types of complementary and alternative therapies for PD

- ▶ **Natural products:** herbs, vitamins, minerals, probiotics, cannabis products
- ▶ **Mind and body practices:** acupuncture, massage, meditation, movement therapies, relaxation techniques, tai chi, yoga, dance, singing
- ▶ **Alternative medicine systems:** traditional Chinese or Korean medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, homeopathy, naturopathic medicine

# Herbs, Vitamins and Minerals

- ▶ **Vitamin E:** an initial study showed a potential protective effect of Vitamin E + Vitamin C, however a better quality follow up study showed no effect
- ▶ **Coq10:** one randomized blinded study showed a trend toward slowed progression but was not large enough to know for sure
- ▶ **Creatine:** initially promising but large high-quality trial showed no benefit

# Herbs, Vitamins and Minerals

- ▶ **Uric acid(inosine):** shown to be safe and feasible, clinical trial ongoing
- ▶ **Mucuna bean:** one small but good quality trial in advanced PD showed good clinical effect but ½ didn't tolerate, another trial by the same group showed similar effect and possibly better tolerance than C/L
- ▶ **Cannabis:** one trial of cannabidiol (CBD) in 21 patients showed a possible beneficial effect on quality of life, a crossover trial of cannabis extract in 17 patients showed no change in any symptoms

# Mind and Body Practices

- ▶ **Acupuncture:** Only 3 good quality trials have been done in PD, no benefit compared to random needling
- ▶ **Massage:** one trial showed no change from baseline in the massage group, but trigger point pressure over 4 weeks improved motor function in a study of 36 patients
- ▶ **Alexander technique (postural awareness)** – fair quality study of 58 patients showed subjective benefit after 12 weeks, sustained at 6 months
- ▶ **Relaxation techniques/biofeedback-** small study of 20 patients showed no motor benefit

# Mind and Body Practices

- ▶ **Tai chi-** 7 clinical trials in PD show that it is safe and feasible, the largest trial of 195 patients showed better balance and decreased falls compared to other exercise after 6 months
- ▶ **Yoga-** one small study of 12 patients showed improved motor function and balance after 12 weeks
- ▶ **Dance-** 5 trials of Tango in PD, best quality study found increased balance compared with conventional exercise

# Bottom Line

- ▶ Herbs, supplements: no high-quality evidence that there is benefit of any specific herb or supplement for PD (with exception of micuna, which may be a reasonable alternative to levodopa). In many cases, there is little research on potential side effects or drug interactions.
- ▶ Mind and body practices are more likely to be helpful than harmful. Pick something that adds to your quality of life.
- ▶ An “expert opinion” is still the lowest level of evidence! Ask if a clinical trial has been done in people like you.
- ▶ With EVERY therapy, ask: Is it helpful? Is it harmful? What is the cost? Is it worth it for ME?

# Recommended Resources for Patients

- ▶ <https://www.michaeljfox.org/> The Michael J Fox Foundation
- ▶ <https://parkinson.org/> Parkinson's Foundation
- ▶ <https://briangrant.org/exercise-videos/> Free exercise videos for Parkinson's including boxing and Tai Chi
- ▶ <https://clinicaltrials.gov/> WAY more info than you'd ever need, but when I hear about a new therapy, I like to search here to see if there have been any clinical trials in patients with Parkinson's



# My sources for this talk

- ▶ 1. Bega D, Zadikoff C. Complementary & Alternative Management of Parkinson's Disease: An Evidence-Based Review of Eastern Influenced Practices. *JMD* 2014;7(2):57-66.
- ▶ 2. Miyasaki JM, Martin W, Suchowersky O, Weiner WJ, Lang AE. Practice parameter: initiation of treatment for Parkinson's disease: an evidence-based review: report of the Quality Standards Subcommittee of the American Academy of Neurology. *Neurology* 2002;58(1):11-17.