The effects of laxatives may provide new clues concerning Parkinson's disease

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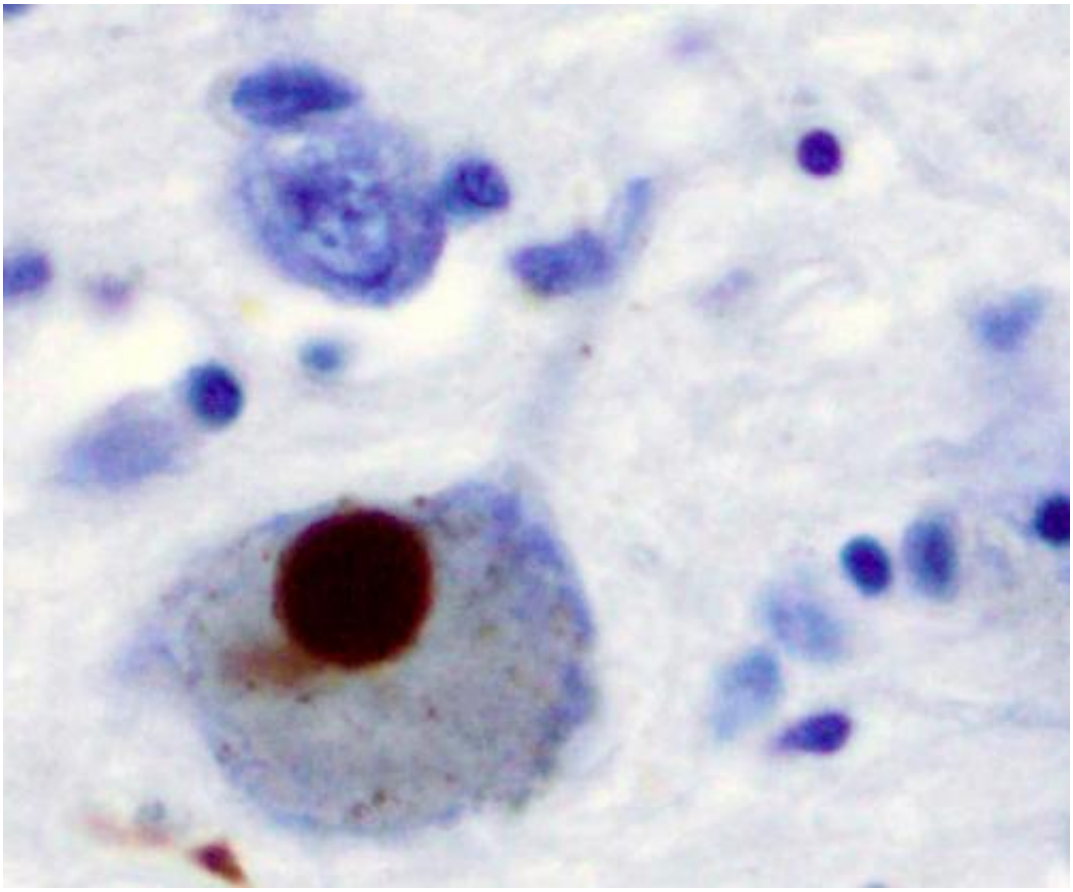

Immunohistochemistry for alpha-synuclein showing positive staining (brown) of an intraneural Lewy-body in the Substantia nigra in Parkinson's disease. Credit: Wikipedia

In a recent retrospective analysis, investigators discovered that the year-

on-year increase in rigidity found in Parkinson's disease flattened off with the regular use of laxatives to manage constipation.

The findings lend support to the team's previous research indicating that changes in the gut—and perhaps a disturbed balance in the microbes that reside there—may affect aspects of Parkinson's disease. The group is working on elucidating the precise mechanisms involved.

"That the apparent effect of regular laxatives appeared in those who had never received drugs for Parkinson's disease points to modification of an underlying disease process," said Dr. John Dobbs, co–lead author of the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* analysis.

"Different aspects of Parkinson's disease may, of course, have different drivers," added co–lead author Dr. Sylvia Dobbs. "For example, our controlled trial of eradicating Helicobacter from the stomach showed a beneficial effect on the diminished movement characteristic of Parkinson's disease."

More information: Aisha D. Augustin et al. Quantifying rigidity of Parkinson's disease in relation to laxative treatment: a service evaluation, *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* (2016). DOI: 10.1111/bcp.12967

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