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Writing tremor in Parkinson's disease: frequency and associated clinical features

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Introduction and objectives: Action tremor in Parkinson's disease may present in up to 46% of patients, either as postural or kinetic tremor. How action tremor may affect handwriting has been the object of some investigations; however clinical features of writing tremor in Parkinson's disease are still not well characterised.

Methods: One hundred consecutive patients with idiopathic Parkinson's disease were included in the study. Demographic and clinical data were collected through a standardized questionnaire. Patients were assessed for the presence of rest, action and writing tremor in on condition. The effect of a standardised sensory trick was also investigated in all patients with action tremor.

Results: Writing tremor was found in 10% of patients (26% of patients with postural/kinetic tremor, either alone or in combination with rest tremor). Severity of writing tremor did not correlated to that of the other tremor variants and to the other clinical variables. Writing tremor was task-specific in 4/10 patients, no task-specific in 6/10. Sensory trick was effective on writing tremor in two patients but did not improve action tremor in any of the study patients.

Conclusions: Results showed that writing tremor in Parkinson's disease is less common than other tremor variants, may be associated with other forms of action tremor, and may sometimes have dystonic features, including task-specificity and sensitivity to sensory trick.