

Michael J. Fox:

This is Michael J. Fox. Thanks for listening to this podcast. Learn more about The Michael J. Fox Foundation's work and how you can help speed a cure at [michaeljfox.org](http://michaeljfox.org).

Michael J. Fox Foundation:

Navigating Parkinson's disease can be challenging, but we're here to help. Welcome to The Michael J. Fox Foundation podcast. Tune in as we discuss what you should know today about Parkinson's research, living well with the disease, and the Foundation's mission to speed a cure. Free resources like this podcast are always available at [michaeljfox.org](http://michaeljfox.org).

Larry Gifford:

Hi, welcome to The Michael J. Fox Foundation Parkinson's podcast. I'm Larry Gifford, a proud member of The Michael J. Fox Foundation Patient Council, founder of [PDavengers.com](http://PDavengers.com), and host of another podcast called When Life Gives You Parkinson.

Tim Hague:

Hey, Larry. Larry, hold on, hang on. Wait a minute. Stop the podcast.

Larry Gifford:

What?

Soania Mathur:

Larry, so sorry for the interruption.

Larry Gifford:

Oh, Hey, it's Tim Hague and Soania Mathur. Excuse us for a second, folks. Hey, what's up, you two? We're starting the podcast.

Tim Hague:

Yeah, but I thought this was the day that we were going to, you know, we were going to do that thing.

Soania Mathur:

Yeah, you remember what we were plotting?

Larry Gifford:

Oh, God. Yeah. I'm so sorry. You're right. Parki-brain. I'll start over. Okay. Are you both ready?

Soania Mathur:

Yeah, yeah, go ahead.

Tim Hague:

Good to go. Good to go.

Larry Gifford:

Hi, don't panic. This is a PD Avengers MJFF Parkinson's Podcast Takeover. I'm Larry Gifford, Co-Founder, President and Board Chair of PD Avengers. Ba-ba-ba-ba-bum.

Soania Mathur:

So, that was dramatic, Larry.

Larry Gifford:

Thank you.

Soania Mathur:

I'm Soania Mathur, Co-Founder and Vice President of the PD Avengers.

Tim Hague:

And I'm Tim Hague, Senior Co-Founder and Secretary and Treasurer of the PD Avengers.

Larry Gifford:

Now I can hear some of you mumbling under your breath, oh, what is a PD Avenger? And where's my Michael J. Fox podcast? Well, you'll be happy to know The Michael J. Fox Foundation Parkinson's podcast is going to be okay. No podcasts will be harmed in the making of this takeover.

Soania Mathur:

Larry, you're so dramatic today, I can't get over it.

Larry Gifford:

I know.

Soania Mathur:

But let's answer the actual question. What is a PD Avenger? The PD Avengers is a nonprofit, patient-led organization working with Michael J. Fox Foundation and over 50 other Parkinson's organizations worldwide to build a global alliance to end Parkinson's.

Tim Hague:

We also have more than 3,700 individuals from 70 countries worldwide who signed up to be PD Avengers.

Larry Gifford:

Yeah, let's stop right there, Tim. A couple of people listening are rolling their eyes. I can hear their eyes rolling around in their eye sockets. Another organization? Geez, aren't there enough organizations already for Parkinson's?

Soania Mathur:

Well, Larry, that's a valid question, but the truth is we can never have enough people helping people with Parkinson's live a better life and search for a way to end this disease, really. Parkinson's was identified more than 200 years ago. And since then, humanity has put men on the moon, eradicated

polio, changed HIV from a death sentence to a chronic illness, has mapped the human genome, and discovered thousands of galaxies among the stars. And yet the gold standard treatment for Parkinson's is still a 50-year-old medication.

Tim Hague:

That's right, Soania, and we're tired of waiting. We need to be a loud, uncomfortable, ever-present voice demanding change in how this disease is seen and treated. We need to be doing more.

Larry Gifford:

Yeah, the PD Avengers was inspired by the book, Ending Parkinson's Disease, and its authors, the rock stars of Parkinson's, doctors Ray Dorsey, Michael Okun, Bastiaan Bloem, and Todd Sherer of the Fox Foundation.

Larry Gifford:

What we do is different than other organizations. We take a think global, act local approach, and align ourselves with organizations that are ready, willing, and able to collaborate with other PD organizations around the world.

Soania Mathur:

Which brings us to why we're here today, Larry. The Michael J. Fox Foundation has been very generous in allowing you, Tim, and I, to introduce you to some of our favorite partner organizations across North America and in Europe.

Tim Hague:

So then, guys, I guess this clearly is not a hostile takeover of the podcast.

Larry Gifford:

Definitely not, Tim. We're all friends here.

Tim Hague:

Oh, okay. Well I guess that's cool. Yeah.

Larry Gifford:

All right. So Tim, Soania, and I are here on behalf of the PD Avengers.

Tim Hague:

We add urgency to research, wellness, and advocacy by uniting people and organizations to the cause of ending Parkinson's disease.

Soania Mathur:

And you can learn more about the work we are doing and register to be a PD Avenger yourself at [pdavengers.com](http://pdavengers.com).

Tim Hague:

You don't have to have Parkinson's to want to help end it. Family members, medical professionals, therapists, friends, we need everyone to join us at PDAvengers.com.

Larry Gifford:

Now let's get to know some of the Parkinson's organizations who are partners with the PD Avengers. Each organization represents one or more of our three pillars: research, wellness, and advocacy.

Soania Mathur:

In research, we believe that patients are integral in every aspect of research and the search for better treatments in ending this disease.

Tim Hague:

We believe every person with Parkinson's should have equitable access to information, medication, and therapies.

Larry Gifford:

And we believe we must build a loud, uncomfortable, ever-present voice demanding change in how the disease is seen and treated. Since we're here at The Michael J. Fox Foundation podcast world headquarters, we might as well start with research.

Soania Mathur:

I have a few organizations that are research-driven that I want to introduce here. YUVEDO Foundation is a Parkinson's organization in Germany. Co-founder Dr. Joerg Karenfort is a competition lawyer for one of the largest firms in the world.

Soania Mathur:

Dr. Cathy Molohan also oversees YUVEDO's international relations. Both have been diagnosed with Parkinson's and are using research to help advocate for people with this disease.

Dr. Joerg Karenfort:

We've asked Maier, which is one of the most prestigious competition economists firm and they have done a paper which now reads Innovation Incentives in the Pharmaceutical Sector: Rethinking Competition and Public Policy. In that study, which unfortunately is only theoretically based, we didn't have the money to fund the full research, which would have been necessary to have all the relevant data.

Dr. Joerg Karenfort:

So, this is kind of on the agenda for the time when we get another 200,000 Euro or dollars, which would probably be needed for such a second paper.

Soania Mathur:

So, you're thinking it'd be important, sort of building the case from an advocacy perspective, in terms of raising funds? And Cathy, do you find that's where YUVEDO is concentrating on those sorts of studies that may not otherwise be funded?

Dr. Cathy Molohan:

I think it's a huge strength of the Foundation, because as Joerg said, he has a very strong background in economics and politics, and his perspective is a very intellectual one, in the best possible sense.

Dr. Cathy Molohan:

I think a lot of us get angry, but we can't express our anger too well. We're just like, "Why is there no other option? Why is there no cure? Why is the best drug still Levodopa, which was invented at the same time the Kennedy Center?"

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Dr. Cathy Molohan:

Still, Levodopa, which was invented at the same time that Kennedy said, let's put a man on the moon. They did it like eight years later, there was a man on the moon. We're still taking Levodopa. It's like Ahh! and I think you can take that anger and take those questions and put them into a very legal and very theoretical framework that is understandable to those in power. You know, we need to be talking to the pharma companies and saying, why is this the case? You know, what.. Are you not interested in a cure? Are you more interested in treatments that continue for a longer time? And these are all questions that we, we need to answer together and we need to put on the agenda.

Dr. Cathy Molohan:

And I think that's where the link between our foundation and Germany and the PD Avengers is so strong as well, because, we all need to highlight very different areas and we just need to shout out our message loud and clear. And I think the tact that you are going to do or taking now is a very interesting and very different tact to a lot of the other activities that you see around.

Larry Gifford:

Oh, YUVEDO a really cool organization. I love the approach that they're taking to really use research to prove the importance of advocacy.

Soania Mathur:

Yeah, they're a very cool group, but young group, but a very cool group. And just a couple of other things YUVEDO hosting the 2021 Parkinson's table tennis world championships. Which is taking place in Berlin in early September. And they're also engaged with your initiative 4.0, which is it's an initiative basically, a 10 point plan lobbying to be in the coalition treaty, which governs the next four years in Germany, YUVEDO is joining forces with other degenerative neurological conditions. And you can read more about their work at [www.YUVEDO.de](http://www.YUVEDO.de)

Larry Gifford:

Oh, that's great. That's great. If you have one more, one more organization, Soania?

Soania Mathur:

Yeah. Another research focused organization for PD is Cure Parkinson's based in the UK and they're doing research into growth factors, stem cells, and the collaborating with others to help find and fund

regenerative trials that will impact people with Parkinson's today; rather than 20 years from now. And Helen Matthew's is his deputy CEO of Cure Parkinson's. And I had the pleasure of speaking with her.

Helen Matthew:

Cure Parkinson's is an organization that was founded back in 2005 by four individuals with Parkinson's who wanted to really put some energy behind research into a cure. And at that particular time, the landscape, the research landscape was pretty bleak. A number of big pharmaceutical companies had left Parkinson's just as that drugs were coming off patent it wasn't making sense for them to be active in the space. And there've been a number of studies that hadn't been successful. And I think we felt that more needed to be done to really focus the effort towards the cure.

Soania Mathur:

Does that impact the type of research that you now fund?

Helen Matthew:

Very much so, the research that we fund is very much focused on trying to slow down the disease to stop it or reverse it. The remit for our research committee who evaluate all our research projects is that the project needs to be in the clinic. That means a phase two clinical trial within five years of our funding, because actually what we want to be able to do is to make a difference to people living with Parkinson's now.

Soania Mathur:

What sort of research is on the horizon for cure Parkinson's?

Helen Matthew:

We have our international link clinical trials program, and we work in collaboration with Van Andel research Institute. Each year, we pull together a group of ideas with very, very strong biochemical evidence. And these are drug ideas that could move into clinical trials. It is a very active and thriving program with now 16 trials with ILCT drugs that are happening around the world. And not all of those are funded by us. Some of those are funded by our partners, but for me, those meetings, the magic is because we have a partner funders in the room with us, particularly Michael J. Fox NIH also joined us, Parkinson's Canada, Parkinson's UK. And that adds a dynamism. But most importantly, we also have people living with Parkinson's at the table.

Soania Mathur:

How do you feel the patients fit into this whole clinical trial process?

Helen Matthew:

It's vitally important that people with Parkinson's are embedded in, in all projects, right from the start. They can really help shape the thinking, but also in terms of viability and practicality, particularly now, as we're moving into an era where hybrid trials are being designed, which involve more home-based visits, we've got to be really mindful of making the clinical trial experience for people with Parkinson's as positive as it can be and making sure that they feel as if they are very much included in the process as part of the clinical study team, as participants, not as subjects, but as participants, proactive participants on that journey.

Soania Mathur:

Yeah, that's a great way of summarizing it. I really think that aligns with what the PD Avengers is all about as well. And speaking of the PD Avengers, you've been an extremely supportive, encouraging and guiding force for us thus far.

Helen Matthew:

For me, PD Avengers is such an important movement. This is about raising the profile of Parkinson's nationally, internationally and locally, the higher the profile of Parkinson's, the greater, the chance that we will attract government interest, and with that government investment. And with that government investment, it's not just in the curative research agenda, but it's also in the wellness research that is, is urgently needed. And I think it is also making sure that Parkinson's is on the agenda globally with the WHO, with the UN. You know, people have Parkinson's in every country around the world. And that health inequality is palpable. It's time that we raise the profile of Parkinson's, it's time we all work together to do that. Each of us of course have our own areas of specialty, but actually we will all benefit if Parkinson's becomes a health priority.

Larry Gifford:

Helen is such a great advocate and leader and supporter of what we're doing. It's great. She's actually the catalyst for what we're doing. She's the one that made the initial call saying, what do people think of that book Ending Parkinson's Disease. I was like, well, let's get some folks together and talking about it.

Soania Mathur:

Yes, yes. I think we do have her to thank for that. And you can learn more about Cure Parkinson's by going to their website [cureParkinsons.org.uk](http://cureParkinsons.org.uk).

Larry Gifford:

Yeah. Go to that website and then go to our website, [pdavengers.com](http://pdavengers.com) and sign up to be a PD Avenger.

Larry Gifford:

Well, we're off and running.

Tim Hague:

Well, run, walk, bike, box. It doesn't matter, Larry, just move your body.

Soania Mathur:

Well, before we move on to wellness, Tim...Michael J. Fox Foundation has been a major influential player in all three pillars that the PD Avengers are committed to. As you may know, The Michael J. Fox Foundation is the largest private funder of Parkinson's research, having raised more than \$1 billion in finding innovative and, at times, high risk research. So it's my absolute pleasure to be here today to talk with Debi Brooks, Co-Founder and CEO of MJFF. Welcome, Debi, and thank you for allowing us to take over this podcast.

Debi Brooks:

Soania, I'm so excited to be with you guys today.

Soania Mathur:

The Foundation has just celebrated 20 years, and as a co-founder, what stands out for you as it relates to how the Fox Foundation came to be?

Debi Brooks:

Sometimes Michael and I stand on the sidelines at a board meeting or at a staff holiday party, and we just look at each other and go, "How did this happen?" In some ways, I think about it, and I realize with Michael especially, how could it not happen?

Debi Brooks:

First of all, before he was kind of out and connecting in the community and shared his diagnosis and had indirectly volunteered by raising his hand, he's known to be warm and inspirational and optimistic. But as you get to know him, you also catch very quickly how wise he is. And it wasn't a shocker to me that he would be able to bring such gifts to any undertaking.

Debi Brooks:

On the one hand, there's a part of me that's not surprised because of Michael. I said before, I can't stress it enough. If this was the Debi Brooks Foundation for Parkinson's Research, we'd be nowhere. So there's just no denying it. But at the same time, there's a magical mix of what we ended up building at the Fox Foundation, that patient-centric passion, and the scientific grounding, and the business-oriented approach that I think has delivered beyond our expectations.

Debi Brooks:

And yet I have to say, I look at it and I think, and we are not done yet. And there is much more to be doing. And I think that's what keeps us engaged and excited and motivated and even optimistic.

Soania Mathur:

Well, we're very grateful that that all occurred and that all happened and the partnership between you and Michael grew. And I do think that without you, the organization would not be where it is today, either.

Soania Mathur:

The main mission of the PD Avengers is to end Parkinson's. And although there are, of course, many smaller victories along the way, the ultimate success for us would be a world without this disease. I imagine that's the same for the Foundation as well, but how will you know when your mission is accomplished? How do you define success for the Foundation's work?

Debi Brooks:

It's a really tricky thing to be concrete about. And I think part of it, we look at this a couple of different ways.

Debi Brooks:

One, let's say our goal is to cure Parkinson's. Well, defining a cure is a pretty important thing. And we think of cure as a continuum, because if I think about just what's been happening in the last 20 years, in



the last 10 years we've had 17 new drug approvals. None of them have been proven to cure Parkinson's, but they are dramatically improving how we treat Parkinson's and the options we have.

Debi Brooks:

And we have a really robust pipeline of treatment ideas that are in clinical research stages, being tested in patients. And as far along as a Phase II, so nothing in Phase III yet.

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Debi Brooks:

As far along as phase two, so nothing in phase three yet, but if any of these break through and can be shown to be able to modify the disease course, that's mind-blowing. And third, but what if we could be figuring out, and we have data that is showing us the way, how to identify people who are at highest risk and kind of validate some early detection models. That sets us up for prevention. So, when I think of that backdrop of just what [inaudible 00:10:33] cure in air quotes here on this podcast, but if you've had Parkinson's for 15 years, better treatments feels cure-like to you. It's really changing your daily routine and your functioning, and your ability to stay connected to the things in your life that are important to you. These are important breakthroughs, but we need things like prevention are far farther away.

Debi Brooks:

And so, when you think about, Oh, how do we track it? How do we know we're succeeding? It's a different answer for people. And again, I'd say, the business person in me says, well, it's pretty well-documented that you're going to spend a single drug, by the way, no drug has gotten over the goal line to give us a data set that says, oh, this is what it takes to have a disease modifying drug and PD, but we have scores of drugs that have made it over the years for improved symptomatic treatment. And those things generally run between, one to one and a half billion dollars. And the aha moment to the drug store shelf is, can be three decades.

Debi Brooks:

Also, trying to assess our impact, having less capital, you that's one drug journey. And we're trying to move as many forward as possible. And we've been at it for two decades. So we may only be in the early stages. So we really do have to think about, well, how do we know we're on the right track? And I think we look at a lot of different things to kind of check ourselves. And it is things like milestones that tell us, oh, we have more shots on goal or birth ideas that are making it further along.

Debi Brooks:

We have a much vaster understanding of what it takes to break through these key milestones and key challenges. And we just keep bringing it. We just, we keep tackling these things. So I think we get a lot of incremental and interstitial information about this, that keeps us really encouraged and feeling we get to cheer a lot when things get FDA approved. I mean, that is clearly a key milestone, but we see a lot of progress at various stages that are along the way that are telling us we are on the right path.

Soania Mathur:

Right. Well, I mean, I think that's one, the strengths of the Fox Foundation, you really do have such a robust portfolio when it comes to research and finding some really innovative and sometimes high-risk

projects. But what are the, how do you prioritize? What are the Foundation's priorities in the near future and in the long term?

Debi Brooks:

Yeah. I mean, first of all, we have, everybody has to prioritize in the field. These, everything is so expensive. And by the way, the expense has a lot of contributing factors, so, and we have, we have dear resources that we can't squander. There's nothing that, it's one thing to say, we're going to place this bet. And we know we have an X, a 50 50 shot that it's going to work, but it's really pain. And you know that, okay, that, that money may not get you the answer, but at least you feel like you put it in a smart bet. There's, it's really hard to see money squandered. And so to me, one of the things we work really hard on is setting that strategic umbrella, to really understand, of all the things we could do, which are the, which of the ones that can have the greatest impact.

Debi Brooks:

And we have an internal algorithm it's not so formalized, but it looks thing, it looks at, it looks like this. What does the name, what does, how will this help a patient? Is this incremental? Is it dramatic? Is it absolutely a new area where we have nothing to help? So we kind of score and loosely score ideas based on the impact to a person with Parkinson's. We also evaluate how far from the goal line is it, because if something's 30 years from the goal line and there's something four years from the goal line, we see ourselves as one of the few entities that can help get the things that are closer to the goal line teed up for pharma to take them over. The Fox Foundation will never be able to take anything. We're not a drug company. But if we can tee something up so that a drug company takes it over the goal line, we're going to prioritize that particularly if it has the promise of important impact.

Soania Mathur:

So we sort of believe also that, patients are central to that team of experts of researchers and clinicians. And then every aspect of research from its conception to development clinic, clinical trials and drug approval process by regulatory bodies can really be expedited and has a greater chance of success if patients are involved. That sort of experience plus expertise can fast track to new treatments. So what are some of the ways that people with Parkinson's disease can participate or are in track with the Foundation to support the research process?

Debi Brooks:

We've built on-ramps where people can get engaged. I'd say principally, one of the easiest ways to get engaged is to participate in something like Fox Insight. Where we're really letting each person tell the story of their journey, and tracking it. And that data gets combined de-identified and then shared with scientists all over the world. So it's the most powerful megaphone we have, and we need tens of thousands of voices because everybody's journey is so different. And it's really one of the best evidence pools we can point to when we're trying to help a regulator or a pharma company, understand that these are, these are real unmet needs, and this is not a one-off, this is a central issue for somebody. So I feel like that platforms that can, that can aggregate enough experiences so that you actually get enough people in the subset of experiences are really important, but we do something quite similar.

Debi Brooks:

I think on the policy side, you really need, that the personal storytelling can be so impactful. We know that's the case with legislators at the federal level, but we see it also at the state level. And there are a

lot of different points of entry for, for people who are living with PD in their support system to kind of share and validate those experiences first hand. There's nothing that's a substitute for that. And so I feel like there are several ways that, we bring, obviously we convene groups, every, our board of directors and various councils, including 100 percent patient oriented council for all those kinds of inputs as well. And so, and I think our communities, our platforms, and social, again, really there to bring scale to the patients and the shared experiences.

Soania Mathur:

Debi you've been at this for a while. You've grown this amazing Foundation which is really changing the lives of Parkinson's patients, but what gives you hope? What gives you hope that you're going to ultimately put yourselves out of business?

Debi Brooks:

What I see, I mean, science requires some serendipity. Biology is super hard. I'm excited right now because people who are developing treatments need a plethora of druggable targets. And 20 years ago, we really didn't have them. It was the dopamine system in the brain. And we are, the dopamine system is obviously critical and most, not all, but most treatments are targeting the dopamine system. We also know that there are plenty of things that good engagement of the dopamine system don't necessarily deliver results for all aspects of Parkinson's.

Debi Brooks:

So it's just, it's [inaudible 00:18:42] but not sufficient. Today we have such a robust landscape of druggable targets, things that we've learned through the observations, which are still quite new in last couple, two decades, about the role that genetics are playing in Parkinson's. There's not a really genetic on-off switch. It's really more how risk is conferred, but every time there's a new genetic mutation that gets identified as, as contributing risk, that becomes a druggable target. And just the genetics alone, which are not the only way in which we identify these targets, but they've been a robust way in the last two decades. That it's transformed the landscape.

Debi Brooks:

And what that tells me is there is so much to mine. And that's what gives me hope because, drug companies, it's such a, it feels a little like a conundrum. We can't succeed without them. And yet they, at some point when you are succeeding, they feel like they're on the opposite side of the fence. And I appreciate that perspective. I think you can say the same thing about almost every entity that dominates different parts of the cycle of getting ideas out of one person's brain into a.

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Debi Brooks:

Out of one person's brain into the hands of a physician that wants to treat a patient. But, I think earnestly, that there are a lot of people in drug companies that want to cure diseases, including something like Parkinson's, which is simply hard. I mean, it's not that they're not interested and they have to prioritize too. And so, the way they prioritize is data driven.

Debi Brooks:

And so to me, this singular shift on so many more novel targets is probably the number one thing that means drug companies are going to... They have a lot of work to do. Hope they unlock new ideas and find new uses for existing assets that they already own. And that we can accelerate that. That's what gives me the most hope, from like a scientific standpoint.

Debi Brooks:

The second piece... And they can't have one without the other really, to ultimately succeed... Is just the engagement of the community and the role that the patients do play.

Debi Brooks:

I meet people almost every day. Post COVID, I'm getting back into that and so, getting back on the road is nothing short of wonderful and not everybody's going to do everything, but if everybody does one thing... And they don't all have to pick the same thing... It is going to continue to build on the momentum that has really taken fire over the last 10 years in particular.

Debi Brooks:

In fact, if I look in my role recently changing, one of the things I've been thinking about is what was the first 10 years? What were we building? And what's happened in the most recent 10 years? And what does the next 10 years look like?

Debi Brooks:

And for us at the Fox Foundation, it's all about engaging people. Engaging people who have Parkinson's and the network around them, including their blood relatives, because we need them for research. But it's beyond that.

Debi Brooks:

We now have scientific rationale to understand who's at risk. Some of those people have no idea. And so, going beyond the people who already know, they care about PD, to engage people who should be thinking about this.

Debi Brooks:

I mean, this is going to be Herculean. But we have a head start, because the community over the last 10 years has already been built and we need it to be stronger and we need it to be broader. But this is also something that gives me great hope.

Soania Mathur:

Well, that kind of ties into my last question, Debi, as this is a PD Avengers Takeover for the Foundation's Podcast. Why did the Foundation agree to partner with PD Avengers?

Debi Brooks:

Well, I think if you think about what it really takes to succeed, it's folly to imagine that one organization is the one and only organization that needs to exist to make this happen.

Debi Brooks:

I mean, just again, if I pull back and think of one subset of needs, which is better treatments, there are three big entities just in that part of the space.

Debi Brooks:

There's government funding in early stages in academia. There's Fox funding, which is highly strategic, that is bridging kind of basic science and teeing it up for, in the translational space to get it into the clinic.

Debi Brooks:

And we often are funding in Phase one and a little bit in Phase two, even, and then there's pharma. And that's just to get a drug approved. Then you have other entities that need to get it to patients and give access and affordability. So, it's just folly to imagine that any success is going to come by a single entity.

Debi Brooks:

And when I think of the role that a lot of patient organizations play, it's really critical for us to reach as far as we can. And so, working with smart people who are motivated, who want to be informed, and who want to figure out which of these things I can do to really make a difference, we need those kinds of partnerships. And so, it's a no brainer.

Larry Gifford:

So, Debi, we got to get Michael to sign up as a PD Avenger. So, how are you going to help us do that?

Debi Brooks:

Well, he's with everybody in spirit on these things as [inaudible 00:24:37] and it's a stunning thing for me to have seen over the years, how many tugs come on his shirt and to remind folks, he's had Parkinson's now for 30 years. And so, I said before, everybody can't do everything and I think it's fair to say he's done a lot and let him pick what he's going to do. But please know, he's in spirit and we're here. And so, I think if you want a role model for an Avenger...

Larry Gifford:

He's the original. We're standing on his shoulders.

Debi Brooks:

Yeah.

Tim Hague:

We really appreciate all that he's done to bring us out of the shadows. I have often said that without The Michael J. Fox Foundation, we would still be lost somewhere back in 1817. And we are so very grateful to all that you, Debi have done and what Michael has done to literally bring us out of the dark and let people know that we exist. And that there's more that we need. So, thank you.

Debi Brooks:

Thank you. And I know that he takes very seriously the appreciation of that, and he took it very seriously stepping into the role. He wanted to do something, but he thought a lot about what's the right thing to

do? Where could he bring the most value? And I think that's an important journey for anybody who wants to get engaged.

Debi Brooks:

It's hard not to be tempted to want to do everything. And at the Fox Foundation, we work hard on that too. I think part of our strength and successes come from staying very... Everything we do has a connection to the goal of speeding drug development and better treatments. And sometimes it may not be so obvious, but I assure you, everything we're doing is in service of that. And that takes every ounce of energy we have.

Debi Brooks:

And I think individuals, there's a similar parallel in that kind of process. And obviously, I'm looking at people on a screen as we record this, and I see people who have done so many things.

Debi Brooks:

So, people can juggle and make their choices, but those prioritizations are critical so that we're rational and sober about where we can make the biggest impact.

Debi Brooks:

And I think I couldn't be more grateful for being the person who happened to be the one that met Michael at the time, to help him realize his vision. But I do think Tim, that he feels a great responsibility and felt a real opportunity to be part of the community by taking those steps.

Soania Mathur:

Thank you. Thanks to you, Debi, Michael, and the Foundation for your passion, commitment, and dedication to get this done. We really do appreciate it and appreciate your time, as well today. Thanks.

Debi Brooks:

Oh, goodness. It's my pleasure.

Larry Gifford:

Thanks Debi. That's awesome.

Larry Gifford:

One of the things to keep in mind about research, and Soania and Tim, you can talk about this too, is that people with Parkinson's need to help out. They need to raise their hands and participate because it doesn't get done without us.

Soania Mathur:

No, that's absolutely true. Larry, without us, there cannot be any better treatments or a cure. It just doesn't work that way. The research community needs to partner with the patient community to make that happen.

Tim Hague:

We continue to say that we're important and research, so we need to really encourage one another and to ourselves, get involved in research wherever, and whenever we can.

Larry Gifford:

And we're not just about research, we're about research and advocacy and wellness, and many of the organizations around the world touch on two or three of those pillars as well. The PD Avengers are inspiring change around the world. As it relates to research though, Dundee University in Scotland, one of our new partners decided to dedicate a hundred percent of their research efforts to Parkinson's projects. In Canada, the Pacific Parkinson's Research Institute helps fund PD research at the university of British Columbia. Next week, we're going to explore six more organizations, three under the advocacy banner, and three dedicated to wellness. Where were you guys ready for that?

Tim Hague:

Absolutely sign me up.

Larry Gifford:

Well, I know you, I mean, you'll be like, doing push-ups getting ready for it.

Larry Gifford:

You'll have Jimmy Choi screaming in your ear.

Tim Hague:

Oh my, yeah.

Larry Gifford:

Come on Tim, three more, four more, 50 more. I do want to also acknowledge Sharon Krischer, Twitchy Woman, for inspiring these episodes of the podcast, because she did this on her own for her support groups, where she invited the different organizations in to explain what they're all about. And we thought it was such a great idea that we could, we could do it here too. And so we want to thank her for that. You can learn more about the Twitchy Woman and Michael J. Fox Foundation and all these great organizations at [pdavengers.com](http://pdavengers.com). And while you're there you might as well just sign up to be a PD Avenger.

Soania Mathur:

Might as well.

Tim Hague:

That's right.

Larry Gifford:

All right. We'll talk to you next week. This is The Michael J. Fox Foundation podcast on behalf of everyone at the Foundation and, and the PD Avengers. We wish you well, and we will talk to you again soon.

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