



PARKINSON'S DISEASE NEWS

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THE NAZI DISCOVERER OF L-DOPA FOR PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Journal of the History of the Neurosciences 2014 Apr 3 [Epub ahead of print] (H.Czech, L.A. Zeidman) Complete abstract : <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24697654>

Walther Birkmayer, an Austrian neurologist, co-discovered the effectiveness of L-dopa for Parkinson's Disease in 1961. However, Birkmayer was a member of SS and a member of the Nazi party. Little has been previously published regarding Birkmayer's ties to Naziism.



Researchers have determined that Birkmayer was not only an early illegal member of the SS and the Nazi party but also took part in "de-Jewification". He also was a leader in the Nazi racial policy office and was praised for his dedication and fanaticism despite being forced to later resign from the SS. He sought support from leading Viennese Nazis and was able to maintain his professional status for the war's remainder.

Postwar, he succeeded at reintegration personally and professionally into Austrian society, all but erasing any obvious ties to his Nazi past. In 1960 Dr. Hornykiewicz demonstrated that dopamine levels were below normal in the brains of people who died of Parkinson's Disease. He and Dr. Arvid Carlsson, believed that L-dopa, a precursor in the biosynthesis of dopamine, could treat Parkinson's Disease. Dr. Hornykiewicz and Dr. Birkmayer began to treat patients with L-dopa. They noticed marked short-term improvements. They published their findings in 1961, which eventually led to L-dopa being the most widely used treatment for Parkinson's Disease. For more information go to Walther Birkmayer :

<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/22/world/walther-birkmayer-86-treated-parkinson-s.html>

<http://www.viartis.net/parkinsons.disease/news/140704.pdf>

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