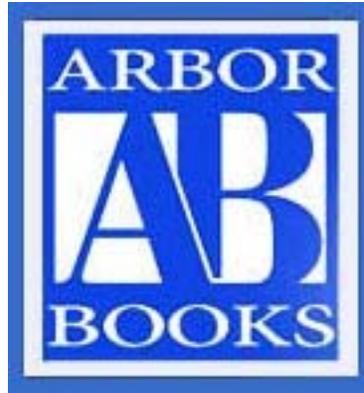


# Head Injuries, Boxing Linked To Parkinson's Disease

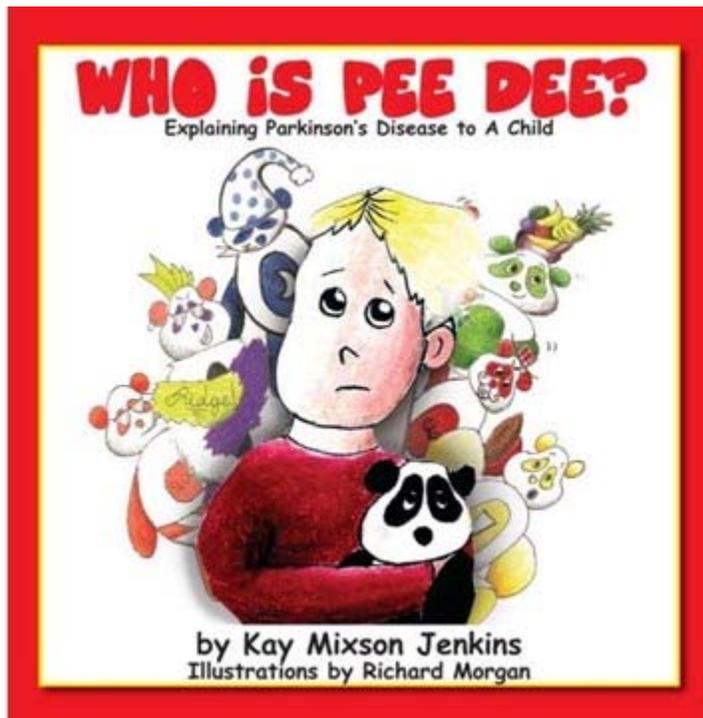


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People who have suffered head injuries are four times more likely to develop Parkinson's disease (also known as "PD") than those who have never had head trauma, according to Mayo Clinic researchers. This finding might have far-ranging implications for sports such as boxing and football.



The Mayo Clinic research team focused on boxing as they sifted for clues. They knew that boxers who have repeated head injuries often get Parkinson's-like symptoms. The most famous connection is professional boxing legend Muhammad Ali, who now suffers from advanced Parkinson's disease.

"Parkinson's is devastating," says Kay Mixson Jenkins, author of the new children's book *Who Is Pee Dee?* "The good news is that because of research like this, people might be able better protect themselves from the devastating, chronic disease."

Ms. Jenkins was diagnosed

with PD when she was just thirty-four. She decided to write her book to help her children understand the disease. The story follows a young boy named Colt as he tries to deal with his mother's chronic illness.

Parkinson's disease affects up to 1.5 million people in the US. The illness typically develops in later life and often impairs motor skills, speech and other functions.

While the causes of PD are still unidentified, many researchers believe that head traumas can raise the chances of getting the disease and suggest avoiding such injuries by:

- Wearing a helmet when biking, riding a motorcycle, or playing sports like football, ice hockey, skiing or snowboarding.
- Wearing a seatbelt while in a car.
- Buckling your child into a safety seat.
- Preventing falls.

"Boxing and football remain dangerous sports that can have serious effects on the health of their players," says Ms. Jenkins. "The government must enact safety regulations for these sports in order to protect athletes from injuries and traumas."

In addition to creating *Who Is Pee Dee?*, Ms. Jenkins is a leader in a nationwide effort to raise awareness about PD. As the founder of Parkinson's in the Park, an affiliated chapter of the National Parkinson Foundation, Ms. Jenkins has created an outreach program that encourages families and friends to participate in the treatment of PD patients.

Kay Mixson Jenkins is the Georgia state co-coordinator for the Parkinson's Action Network, leads the Effingham County Parkinson's support group and was selected as a Parkinson's patient advocate for UCB, Inc.

*Who Is Pee Dee? Explaining Parkinson's Disease to a Child* by Kay Mixson Jenkins is available on Amazon.com.

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