



Michigan State University selected as site for national Parkinson's disease study

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March 22, 2007, EAST LANSING, Mich. — Michigan State University has been selected as one of 51 sites around the country that will take part in a major clinical study to test the effectiveness of a drug that could slow the progression of Parkinson's disease.

The National Institutes of Health study will attempt to determine if a dietary supplement known as creatine helps slow the progression of a disease that affects more than 1 million Americans.

Parkinson's disease is a degenerative disorder of the brain in which patients develop symptoms such as tremor, slowness of movements and stiffness of muscles that progressively worsen as the disease evolves.

"Pilot studies have given us an indication that creatine may be effective, but conducting a large, controlled clinical trial is the only way to be certain," said John Goudreau, MSU associate professor of neurology and ophthalmology who is leading MSU's part in the study. "The idea is to have a drug that prevents people from getting to the later stages of the disease where management of the symptoms becomes problematic."

Nationwide, the study will attempt to recruit as many as 2,000 patients, half of which will receive the creatine, the other half a placebo. Patients will be asked to participate for five to seven years.

"This is one of the first times the NIH has coordinated a large, multicenter trial for Parkinson's disease," said Goudreau, who also has an appointment in the MSU Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology. "The successful completion of this long-term trial will depend on active participation of patients and their health care providers."

Goudreau said one of the major advantages of being a part of this study is patients do not have to abandon any of the care they are already receiving.

"Every medication or treatment a doctor would do for the patient to help them manage their Parkinson's disease they will continue to do," he said. "The goal is to evaluate a community-based sample of patients to see how creatine works in people who are cared for in a routine fashion."

To be eligible for the study, one needs a confirmed case of Parkinson's disease and be on medications that control symptoms, such as Sinemet, Requip or Mirapex, for at least nine months but no longer than two years.

Creatine is a nutritional supplement that supports energy production in brain cells affected by Parkinson's disease. While creatine can be found in health food stores and online in small amounts, Goudreau and other researchers are quick to point out that the supplement will not directly treat the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

"It is unclear if the supplement will slow the progression of the symptoms over many years; that is why it is so important to do a controlled study of this type," he said. "One thing we want to get across is that you can't go to the store, buy small amounts of creatine and think it's going to improve your Parkinson's symptoms. We don't want anyone to think this is a panacea for Parkinson's."

Of the 51 sites for this project in the U.S. and Canada, at least two are in Michigan – at MSU and the University of Michigan.

This is one of several Parkinson's-related projects at MSU. In total, the university has been awarded nearly \$2 million in funded research relating to Parkinson's disease.

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