

HEALTH NEWS

National Alcoholism Study Offers New Hope

(NAPSA)—At 14, Lisa took her first drink. Soon, she could not control her urges and her drinking spiraled out of control. By her 20s, Lisa was drinking daily to “get drunk or get a good buzz.” She tried several times to stop, but failed.

The cycle of alcohol-filled nights and hung-over mornings finally changed—when Lisa enrolled in the Combining Medications and Behavioral Interventions (COMBINE) study at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Mass.

Once accepted into COMBINE, Lisa (now 30) attended weekly meetings with counselors and researchers and took a medication. “Soon after beginning this regimen, I realized I had lost the urge to get drunk,” she says.

More than eight million American adults have alcoholism and about 13 percent of Americans experience the disease some time during their lives. COMBINE offers hope to people like Lisa who need help controlling the urge to drink.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, part of the National Institutes of Health (within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), began recruitment for COMBINE in 2001. The study is ongoing at 11 hospitals and universities across the country.

The medications being studied are naltrexone, which interferes with alcohol’s rewarding effects and reduces the likelihood of relapse into heavy drinking, and acamprosate, a medication used widely in Europe to relieve the discomfort of alcohol withdrawal.



An ongoing clinical study may help many people overcome their alcohol dependence.

COMBINE participants receive one or both medications or placebo pills, together with behavioral therapy. About 10 percent of patients receive talk therapy and no pills.

“Past research shows that many people who receive treatment for alcoholism relapse at least once. Combining medication with behavioral treatments offers new hope and may lead to better outcomes,” said Roger Weiss, MD, principal investigator at the McLean study site.

Because of the “blind” nature of the study, Lisa doesn’t know whether she was helped by medications, the behavioral therapy or a placebo effect. What she does know is that, for the first time in 15 years, she is happy, healthy and sober.

To find a study site, visit www.clinicaltrials.gov and enter the search term COMBINE. Participants must be 18 years or older and meet clinical criteria for alcohol dependence (alcoholism).