

Health Bulletin



Research Provides New Information For Parkinson's Patients

(NAPSA)—Parkinson's disease is an incurable and debilitating disorder that affects one million people in the U.S.

While there is no cure for Parkinson's, which causes muscle weakness, tremor, stiffness and loss of coordination, new research with standard therapies is offering useful information about the progression of the disease.

Movement problems associated with Parkinson's are due to a progressive decline in the brain's ability to make and use dopamine, a neurotransmitter that ensures smooth movement.

A landmark study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed for the first time via brain imaging that treatment may actually affect neurodegeneration in Parkinson's patients, an important breakthrough in treating the disease. The study enrolled 82 patients that were also involved in a study to compare the onset of motor complications between the group treated with pramipexole and those treated with levodopa.

The study compared two current treatments, pramipexole, marketed by Pharmacia Corporation of Peapack, New Jersey, under the brand name MIRAPEX® (pramipexole dihydrochloride tablets), and levodopa, long considered to be the standard treatment for Parkinson's disease.

After several years of use, levodopa has been associated with dyskinesias (involuntary jerking movements) and other motor complications. In order to delay the onset of these problems, dopamine

Fair Balance Statement

Note to Editor: Pramipexole is indicated for the treatment of the signs and symptoms of idiopathic Parkinson's disease. The use of pramipexole can cause drowsiness and the possibility of suddenly falling asleep during daily activities, which could result in accidents while driving. The most common side effects of pramipexole are nausea, sleeplessness, constipation, involuntary movement, and dizziness upon standing and hallucinations.



New brain scans help doctors determine best treatment options for Parkinson's disease.

agonists such as pramipexole are used increasingly as a first choice for initial treatment of Parkinson's disease.

"This current study adds important new information to the growing body of knowledge in the early treatment of Parkinson's disease," said Kenneth Marek, MD, senior scientist at the Institute for Neurodegenerative Disorders in New Haven, Connecticut, and the researcher who led the study.

Researchers used a brain imaging technique called SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) to map the brain's activity on (note: not all 82 patients were imaged over 4 years) patients over a four-year period. Patients who started treatment with pramipexole showed fewer signs of neuron degeneration than those given levodopa as their initial treatment.

"There is less loss of brain activity in the area of the brain relevant to Parkinson's in the group started on pramipexole," said Marek.

For more information, visit <http://www.mirapex.com>.