

Senior Health News

Drug May Help Parkinson's Disease Patients With Dementia

(NAPSA)—Results from a new study published in the December 9th issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine* show that the Alzheimer's disease medication, Exelon® (rivastigmine tartrate) may also provide important benefits in symptoms of dementia in Parkinson's disease patients.

Parkinson's disease affects 1.5 million Americans. According to the National Parkinson Foundation, dementia is one of the complications most feared by Parkinson's disease patients. It is estimated that dementia occurs in approximately 40 percent of people with Parkinson's disease, and that it may affect up to 80 percent as the disease further progresses.

Beverly and Jerry Bernstein have known the devastation of Parkinson's disease first-hand. Jerry was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease fourteen years ago, but continued to live an active life for more than a decade after his diagnosis. A few years ago, however, Jerry started losing his memory and became confused and agitated.

"When Jerry got Parkinson's, he had difficulties, but he was still ambulatory and he still was okay with his mind. We could still do what we normally did," says his wife Beverly. "But when the



Nearly forty percent of the 1.5 million Americans with Parkinson's disease also suffer from dementia.

dementia came about, everything changed."

People with Parkinson's disease who have dementia experience cognitive symptoms (such as problems with attention and memory impairments) and behavioral problems (such as agitation and mood swings), and have increasing difficulty performing daily tasks. There are currently no FDA-approved treatments for dementia in these patients, however, the results of the study offer some encouraging news.

The study examined the effects of a drug called Exelon on 541 Parkinson's disease patients with

dementia. This study is the first well-designed, large-scale trial to show benefit in treating dementia in these patients.

"Results from this study show that Exelon may be able to help Parkinson's disease patients who are experiencing dementia, a problem in many of these patients," commented Jeffrey Cummings, MD, Professor of Neurology at the University of California in Los Angeles. "The outcomes, in both cognitive and certain behavioral aspects, demonstrated in this trial by patients taking Exelon can translate into meaningful gains—such as taking a more active role in everyday life, interacting with loved ones, and maintaining independence longer—all of which can make a real difference for both patients and their families."

Beverly Bernstein hopes that treatments to help with the dementia aspect of Parkinson's disease will get more attention, and some day spare others from going through what she and her family have experienced.

Exelon is indicated for patients with mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease. For more information about Exelon visit www.Exelon.com. For more information about Parkinson's disease visit www.Parkinson.org.

Note to Editors: Safety Information

Exelon (rivastigmine tartrate) is approved for mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease. Exelon use is associated with significant stomach-related side effects, including nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and weight loss. If therapy is interrupted for longer than several days, treatment should be reinitiated with the lowest daily dose in order to avoid the possibility of severe vomiting and its potentially serious consequences.

In clinical studies, stomach-related side effects occurred more frequently as doses were increased. The weight loss associated with Exelon occurred more commonly among women receiving high doses in clinical studies. Because these side effects can be serious, caregivers should be encouraged to monitor for these adverse events and inform the physician if they occur. People at risk for certain heart conditions or stomach ulcers should notify their doctor before starting Exelon therapy. In clinical studies, some patients also experienced fainting, weakness, and upset stomach. For more information, please see complete prescribing information at www.exelon.com.