

MEDICAL UPDATE

New Findings May One Day Shorten Lyme Disease Treatment

(NAPSA)—According to the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. has seen a doubling of new Lyme disease cases in the last decade from just over 9,000 cases in 1991 to nearly 18,000 new cases in 2000.

The disease starts with a rash and flu-like symptoms. If untreated, it can result in heart, joint and nervous system problems. Fortunately, treatments can completely eradicate the disease and recent studies show that shorter courses of antibiotics may be as effective as the longer courses now prescribed.

Dr. Charles Pavia, head of the department of microbiology at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYCOM) of New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) says he has discovered a more efficient treatment regime for early stage Lyme disease.

The antibiotic ceftriaxone, already proven successful for the late stages of the illness, has been found to be effective in treatment of early stages of infection as well, says a paper co-authored by Dr. Pavia and his colleague Dr. Gary Wormser.

The paper was published in a recent issue of *Antimicrobial Agents & Chemotherapy*.

“Our data shows that a much shorter but slightly more intense treatment regimen is just as effective as the current amount of therapy that is believed to be needed to



The total treatment for Lyme disease may soon be given in one day rather than five.

ensure complete absence of infection,” said Dr. Pavia, who conducted the experiment on Lyme-infected mice.

Dr. Pavia was not surprised that the antibiotic was effective in early treatment of Lyme-infected mice, but that the total treatment can be condensed and given in one day, rather than stretched out for five to seven days.

Although Dr. Pavia says that the regimen has only been tested on animals, it may indicate that many patients being treated for Lyme disease may be taking more antibiotics than they need to.

Taking less antibiotics to achieve the same results could save time, money and prevent patients from building up a resis-

tance to antibiotics.

“We are delighted with Dr. Pavia’s discovery and its possible importance to the treatment of Lyme disease,” said Dr. Edward Guiliano, NYIT president and CEO. “Such work is helping to augment the medical school’s reputation in the field of contemporary microbiological research.”

The findings pave the way for clinical studies on human patients, which could take one to two years to complete.

Objections may be voiced by patient advocacy groups, says Dr. Pavia, who may argue that longer amounts of therapy are needed because without longer therapy, there is no certainty that the disease has been fully eradicated.

“Human clinical trials, if carefully conducted and controlled, should be able to adequately address such concerns by determining more precisely the appropriate duration of antibiotic therapy for patients having early uncomplicated Lyme disease,” said Dr. Pavia.

The trials were conducted principally in the labs of NYCOM at NYIT’s Old Westbury campus, with relatively modest funding absorbed by general operating budgets.

The studies were done independent of the drug manufacturer, who played no role in the study and did not provide the drug free of charge.