



spotlight on health

New Treatment May Be Step In Right Direction For People With Leg Pain

(NAPS)—Despite recent advances in the treatment of cardiovascular disease, there is one vascular, or blood vessel, disorder that remains difficult to conquer. Peripheral arterial disease, or PAD as it is known to the medical community, is frequently dismissed as a normal part of aging because of its tendency to afflict people over the age of 50 with intense leg pain or numbness.

Unfortunately, those with untreated PAD are at high risk of stroke, and in extreme cases, may need amputations of the lower extremities due to infections from wounds that do not heal because of the poor blood circulation caused by the condition. The restricted blood flow to the legs and feet results from the build-up of fatty deposits, or plaque, along the walls of the vessels that carry blood from the heart, called arteries.

While PAD can potentially affect all older adults, those at highest risk are smokers and diabetics, as well as people who are overweight, have high blood pressure or high cholesterol and/or do not exercise. Lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise, diet control and smoking cessation, can often slow the progression of PAD. However, when these approaches are unsuccessful, patients must undergo other treatments to resume normal blood flow, most notably balloon angioplasty, which opens clogged arteries by inflating a tiny balloon at the site of the plaque build-up. While this proce-



Leg problems may be a sign of a vascular disease. Your doctor can tell you what to do.

Symptoms of PAD include:

- Leg pain
- Numbness in the legs
- Leg cramping
- Leg fatigue during activity that subsides when you stop

cedure is effective, nearly half of patients who undergo the treatment experience restenosis, or re-narrowing of the vessel, a few months later, and may require another procedure.

Now, Pharmacyclics, Inc., a pharmaceutical company developing new approaches to treat cancer, vascular diseases and retinal disease, is investigating a non-surgical technique to treat PAD and potentially prevent restenosis. A clinical trial is underway at 17 hospitals around the country involving PAD patients to evaluate a new, minimally invasive procedure

known as Antrin® (motexafin lutetium) photoangioplasty.

Antrin photoangioplasty uses a water-soluble agent, Antrin, that is composed of molecules that absorb energy from light. It is injected through an IV tube and accumulates in the plaque along the walls of the vessels. Twenty-four hours later, a special far-red light attached to an optical fiber is inserted into the clogged vessel to activate the drug. This process generates a chemical reaction that may reduce or eliminate the plaque, and may reduce the risk of restenosis.

“We are excited about the potential of this new therapy being studied for the treatment of vascular diseases,” said Dean J. Kereiakes, M.D., medical director of the Lindner Clinical Research Center, director of the Ohio Heart Health Center and professor of clinical medicine at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. “Antrin’s ability to localize in the diseased portions of the arteries may allow us to target these specific areas of arterial blockage without damaging surrounding tissues. It is these diseased areas that can later cause restenosis.”

If you or someone you know are experiencing pain, cramping or fatigue in the legs during activity (which subsides when you stop), or if you have been diagnosed with PAD within the last year and would like to learn more about the study, access www.centerwatch.com or call (800) 752-5896 for information on a site nearest you.