

ADVANCES IN HEALTH CARE

New Medication May Help Many Injured Americans

(NAPSA)—Researchers may soon have some good news for many of the nearly 200,000 people in the U.S. who live with a disability related to a spinal cord injury—and the approximately 11,000 Americans who the Centers for Disease Control predicts will join them this year.

A Problem

For many people whose spinal cord has been hurt, a common consequence is spasticity. It occurs when the normal flow of nerve signals is interrupted, prompting an exaggeration of reflexes that leave the muscles jumping. These uncontrolled muscle spasms can be painful and interfere with the ability to sit comfortably, maintain balance, get restful sleep and engage in such daily activities as dressing and eating. Involuntary spasms also pose safety concerns because patients can easily fall out of wheelchairs or off their beds. Also, some people with spasticity experience difficulty breathing and an increased risk of pressure sores.

“Sometimes when muscle spasms kick in, patients can’t move at all,” explained physical therapist Michelle Nemeth. She’s the leading research coordinator at Shepherd Center, a private, not-for-profit hospital devoted to the medical care and rehabilitation of people with spinal cord injury and disease, acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis and other neuromuscular problems.

A Possible Solution

Currently, 10 medical centers nationwide are evaluating a new,



Researchers work with a patient to see how a new drug can help people suffering from spinal cord injuries.

centrally acting muscle relaxant that may offer hope. Spinal cord injury patients can take medication to try to control the spasms. Unfortunately, currently available medications can make patients drowsy. The new drug, called AV650 or tolperisone, is being developed by Avigen, Inc. Tolperisone has been used in other countries for more than 40 years and has the potential to cause no drowsiness or sedation.

A Study

In the research study, participants are randomly assigned the drug or a placebo taken by mouth three times a day for 35 days. They must make eight study-related visits to the clinic and they get a small stipend for their time and expenses.

“Our hope with this study is to find a drug that is safe for patients and provides adequate symptom relief without causing harmful side effects,” said Dr. David Apple.

Learn More

For information about the study and how to be part of it, you can call the Clinical Trial Hotline toll-free at 1-866-924-4695 or visit www.avigen.com.