

Drug reduces daily 'off' time for Parkinson patients

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Parkinson disease patients taking the drug, ropinirole 24-hour prolonged release significantly reduced their daily "off" time in which Parkinson's symptoms like tremor, slowness, stiffness, and walking difficulty return as drugs wear off, according to a study published in the April 3, 2007, issue of *Neurology*, the scientific journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

The study involved 393 people with Parkinson disease who weren't responding optimally to the widely used treatment for Parkinson, levodopa. For the study, half of the group took the prolonged release version of the drug ropinirole, called ropinirole 24-hour, and levodopa for six months. The other half took placebo and levodopa. Other Parkinson disease medications were not changed during the study.

Researchers found those people taking the drug reduced their average daily "off" time by 2.1 hours compared to .3 hours in the placebo group.

"Ropinirole 24-hour prolonged release, when taken with levodopa, is effective in reducing daily 'off' time for Parkinson patients who aren't getting the best results from levodopa," said study author Rajesh Pahwa, MD, with the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, Kansas, and Fellow of the American Academy of Neurology. "We also found the drug helped improve quality of life and motor function."

Among those taking ropinirole, researchers found significant improvements in troublesome Parkinson symptoms, quality of life,

depression, emotional well-being, stigma, and sleep. Over half of the people in the ropinirole group were classified as "much improved" or "very much improved" compared to 14 percent in the placebo group. Those taking ropinirole were also able to reduce their dosage of levodopa.

According to the study, common side effects were involuntary movements, nausea, dizziness, drowsiness, hallucinations, and sudden drops in blood pressure. The 24-hour prolonged release ropinirole appears to be as effective as immediate release ropinirole and better tolerated.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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