

Dutch open their first 'poop bank' to treat gut diseases

February 15 2016

After blood and sperm banks, Dutch researchers have now opened the country's first "poop bank" in a rare and cutting-edge branch of medicine to treat people with chronic gut infections.

"Our poop bank will help give doctors and hospitals access to transplants of fecal matter," Ed Kuijper, professor of microbiology at Leiden University, told AFP.

The Netherlands Donor Feces Bank (NDFB) will collect, store and distribute the stools necessary to help with such transplants.

Often this is the "only solution for people suffering from chronic intestinal infections, and in particular 'Clostridium difficile (CD)'," a bacteria which can develop in patients particularly after lengthy and heavy courses of antibiotics, Kuijper said.

"Certain antibiotics destroy [intestinal flora](#) which allows bacteria to develop and spread," he explained.

"Transplants of fecal matter allow healthy bacteria to be put back into the body, which then spread in the intestines and recreate healthy flora in the gut."

There are about 3,000 people diagnosed with CD annually in the Netherlands, and about five percent of cases become chronic. About three to four [transplants](#) of fecal material are carried out in the country

every month.

In some cases, such infections can be fatal after triggering severe diarrhoea, inflammation of the colon and even intestinal perforations.

Donors must be "in good health, neither too overweight or too skinny and must have good intestinal flora," said Kuijper.

Unlike in the United States, where the first two poop banks were opened last year, donors are not paid. Donations are collected at home, and the donor remains anonymous.

The donated stools are taken to the bank in western city of Leiden and then transformed into a product which can be transplanted either through a nasal endoscopy or implanted directly via a colonoscopy.

It is hoped the "poop bank" will also aid research into other illnesses and may be adapted for other conditions such as the debilitating Crohn's disease.

"Stool donations are not as accepted yet as blood donations," Kuijper acknowledged.

"But I think it's a question of what people are used to, and donors are offering the possibility of a safe treatment to patients suffering from what is a difficult illness."

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Citation: Dutch open their first 'poop bank' to treat gut diseases (2016, February 15) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-02-dutch-poop-bank-gut-diseases.html>

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