

Doubling up to fight pain

July 13 2016, by Anne Craig

Queen's University researcher Ian Gilron has uncovered a more effective way of treating fibromyalgia, a medical condition characterized by chronic widespread pain typically accompanied by fatigue, as well as sleep, mood and memory problems.

The results of the trial suggest that combining pregabalin, an anti-seizure drug, with duloxetine, an antidepressant, can safely improve outcomes in fibromyalgia, including not only pain relief, but also physical function and overall quality of life. Until now, these drugs have been proven, individually, to treat fibromyalgia pain.

"Previous evidence supports added benefits with some drug combinations in fibromyalgia," says, Dr. Gilron (Anesthesiology, Biomedical Sciences). "We are very excited to present the first evidence demonstrating superiority of a duloxetine-pregabalin combination over either drug alone."

Fibromyalgia was initially thought to be a musculoskeletal disorder. Research now suggests it's a disorder of the central nervous system - the brain and spinal cord. Researchers believe that fibromyalgia amplifies painful sensations by affecting the level and activity of brain chemicals responsible for processing [pain signals](#).

"The condition affects about 1.5 to 5 per cent of Canadians - more than twice as many women as men. It can have a devastating on the lives of patients and their families," explains Dr. Gilron. "Current treatments for fibromyalgia are either ineffective or intolerable for many patients."

This study is the latest in a series of clinical trials - funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) - that Dr. Gilron and his colleagues have conducted on combination therapies for [chronic pain](#) conditions. By identifying and studying promising [drug combinations](#), their research is showing how physicians can make the best use of current treatments available to patients.

"The value of such combination approaches is they typically involve drugs that have been extensively studied and are well known to health-care providers," says Dr. Gilron.

This new research was published in the journal *Pain*.

Dr. Gilron and his research team at Queen's are members of the SPOR Network on Chronic Pain. The national network, funded under Canada's Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research, directs new research, trains researchers and clinicians, increases access to care for [chronic pain sufferers](#), and speeds up the translation of the most recent research into practice.

Provided by Queen's University

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