Drug to tackle lung scarring shows promise

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People with a lung scarring condition that leaves them fighting for breath could be helped by a new medication, research suggests.

Results from an early stage clinical trial show that the new drug has no serious side effects and was well tolerated by patients with the condition, called Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis.

New therapy

The findings also reveal promising signs that the drug – called TD139 – may help to slow progression of disease.

The trial led by the University of Edinburgh involved 24 patients who were treated for two weeks with either TD139 or a dummy treatment.

Minimal side effects

After two weeks, those treated with the drug had reduced levels of key molecules in their blood that are linked to a worsening of the disease.

TD139 appeared safe and was well tolerated by patients in this study.

"This is a welcome and much needed break-through for the treatment of IPF. This inhaled drug is delivered directly into the lung, is concentrated within lung cells and has minimal side effects in the short term," says Dr Nikhil Hirani.

Chronic disease

Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis is a chronic disease characterised by a progressive decline in lung function. It is caused by increased scarring in the lung tissue which causes breathlessness.

TD139 works by blocking a molecule called galectin 3, which is known to play a key role in the scarring process. The drug is given to patients by inhalation.

Further studies

Experts are now planning a further clinical trial to work out the optimum dose for the therapy.

The drug will then be tested in a much larger, randomised study, to check whether the approach offers any benefit for patients.

Findings from the first trial will be presented at the American Thoracic Society's annual conference in Washington DC this week.

Provided by University of Edinburgh