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In this issue

Life Extension Update Exclusive

NIH to try creatine in Parkinson's disease

Health Concern

Parkinson's disease

Featured Products

Super Bioactive CoQ10 Ubiquinol

Micronized Creatine Capsules

Life Extension

Overstock Sale ends March 26!

Life Extension Update Exclusive

NIH to try creatine in Parkinson's disease

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) is recruiting 1720 individuals for one of the largest Parkinson's disease clinical trials to date, which will seek to determine if creatine slows the disease's progression. Creatine is a nutritional supplement used by athletes and others to enhance exercise performance. The compound was identified by Parkinson's disease researchers as having potential to treat the disease via a new rapid screening method.

The double-blind, placebo-controlled, phase III trial will enroll participants with early-stage Parkinson's disease at medical centers across the United States and Canada. The trial is the first large study in a series called NET-PD (NIH Exploratory Trials in Parkinson's Disease), whose goal is to find effective treatments. Half of the study's subjects will receive creatine while the remainder will receive a placebo for five years, during which participants will be periodically assessed for disease progression.

"This study is an important step toward developing a therapy that could change the course of this devastating disease," NIH director Elias A. Zerhouni, MD, commented. "The goal is to improve the quality of life for people with Parkinson's for a longer period of time than is possible with existing therapies."

Research suggests that creatine can improve the function of the energy-producing organelles of the cell known as mitochondria, and provide an antioxidant benefit. Research in an animal model of Parkinson's disease using creatine has shown a protective effect against the loss of cells affected by the disease. "Creatine, or any compound that may slow the progression of Parkinson's disease, could have very important long-term benefits for people who are living with this disease," stated NINDS associate director for clinical trials John R. Marler, MD.

"We think it may help cells that are damaged or overworked," explained Dr Kapil D. Sethi, who is the director of the Movement Disorders Program at the Medical College of Georgia, one of the 51 sites conducting the study. "By giving more energy to the cell, you are giving them a safety margin. If a cell is dying, it takes another route and that would be surviving."

Medical College of Georgia will be participating in a similar study of coenzyme Q10 to be conducted later this year. Coenzyme Q10 is another nutritional supplement that is involved in the production of energy. Like creatine, it is also available over-the-counter. Even though the supplements are widely available, Dr Sethi believes that Parkinson's disease patients will still want to participate in the trial. "They are willing to take the risk of being on placebo for the cause of science and to learn more about the disease," he said. "They want to beat this disease and if they can't, they want to help somebody else beat it."

Health Concern

Parkinson's disease

During Parkinson's, cells in the parts of the brain that control movement and regulate mood are gradually destroyed. The primary defect in Parkinson's is a loss of dopaminergic neurons (such as dopamine-producing neurons) in a part of the brain called the substantia nigra. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that modulates movement (Purves D et al 2001). In Parkinson's disease, the dopamine-producing nerve cells are destroyed by high levels of oxidative damage (Atasoy HT et al 2004; Ross GW et al 2004). There is evidence that this oxidative damage is, in turn, caused by defects in the cells' mitochondria, or power-generating centers.

The ideal treatment for Parkinson's disease would be a neuroprotective agent—a treatment that protects the brain. While no neuroprotective prescription agent has been found, studies suggest that high-dose coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10), a natural agent, may have neuroprotective properties. CoQ10 is known to support mitochondria by enhancing energy levels in the brain, as well as by acting as a powerful antioxidant. In one phase 2 clinical trial, CoQ10 significantly slowed the progression of Parkinson's disease (Beal MF 2003).

http://www.lef.org/protocols/neurological/parkinsons_disease_01.htm

Featured Products

Super Bioactive CoQ10 Ubiquinol

When it comes to achieving optimal results from your CoQ10 supplement, how much you absorb is of critical importance. Since 1983, Life Extension has continuously sought out the purest, most bioavailable CoQ10 available. Now, Japan's largest CoQ10 producer has patented a form of CoQ10 that offers unprecedented bioavailability—capable of increasing human blood levels up to 8 times more efficiently than the higher-absorption CoQ10 products on the market today.

<http://www.lef.org/newshop/items/item00952.html>



Micronized Creatine Capsules

Several mechanisms have been proposed to explain the increased exercise performance seen after acute and chronic creatine intake:

1. Optimizing energy metabolism by maintaining higher levels of the body's energy compound adenosine triphosphate or ATP.
2. Increasing protein synthesis through hyperhydration of cells.
3. Preventing tissue damage by stabilizing cellular membranes and maintaining reserves of ATP.

<http://www.lef.org/newshop/items/item00609.html>



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<http://www.lef.org/os2/>

If you have questions or comments concerning this issue or past issues of Life Extension Update, send them to ddye@lifeextension.com or call 954 202 7716.

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