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### **New study in constipation in Parkinson's disease - Movicol<sup>®</sup> reduces pain and gets things moving**

Results published in the *European Journal of Geriatrics* from one of the largest studies ever undertaken in Parkinson's disease (PD) show, that taken orally, the iso-osmotic laxative Movicol (polyethylene glycol 3350 + electrolytes) is highly effective in relieving the hard and painful stools associated with the constipation that affects the majority of Parkinson's patients, with the number experiencing pain-free defecation rising from 8 to 82 percent, and the frequency of stool passage doubling over the study period.<sup>1</sup>

It is estimated that 75-80 percent<sup>2,3</sup> of PD patients suffer from constipation, the frequency and severity of which correlates directly to the progression of the illness.<sup>4</sup> Constipation in PD is associated with significant morbidity and is frequently treatment-resistant to standard therapies, including most oral laxatives.

This multicentre study involved 544 patients and was conducted over a 12- week period. On entry to the study the average number of weekly bowel movements per patient was 2.28 despite the fact that the majority (87%) were receiving some form of laxative treatment. Average weekly bowel movements on Movicol increased to 5.02 at 4 weeks, 5.32 at 8 weeks and 5.43 at 12 weeks.

At the start of the study, 90% of patients had painful defaecation, this reduced to 25% at 4 weeks, 15% at 8 weeks and 11% at 12 weeks. At the end of the study the investigators assessed bowel movements as normalised in 64% of patients and significantly improved in a further 34%.

*"The challenges of constipation in PD are probably not fully appreciated,"* said Mary Baker MBE, President of the European Parkinson's Disease Association. *"It is one of the symptoms that make people with Parkinson's feel lethargic and unwell, and can cause great distress impacting on their quality of life. It is a major health issue that should be discussed regularly with their doctor and active steps taken to relieve discomfort, thereby improving their daily lives,"* she added.

Dr Judith Livingstone, a General Practitioner based in London, commented, *"This is an important study. Constipation in Parkinson's Disease is poorly managed in primary care. As GPs, we should actively enquire about bowel function in our patients with Parkinson's Disease."*

Unlike most laxatives the dose of Movicol required tends to decrease over time. In this study the mean starting dose was 1.9 sachets a day, but at 12 weeks this had reduced to 1.3 sachets a day. Movicol treatment was well tolerated with 96 percent of patients and 97 percent of physicians' rating Movicol's tolerability as good. Only 6 patients in the study reported adverse events.

Taken orally, Movicol is a combination of PEG 3350 and electrolytes, and is a non-absorbable, iso-osmotic agent, which bulks stools, by the addition of water, allowing them to be passed gently and spontaneously.

People with Parkinson's disease have considerable problems to deal with. The improved management of constipation by an effective and well-tolerated treatment is likely to be welcomed by patients, carers and healthcare professionals.

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**Notes to the editor:**

- For more information on Movicol please email [medinformation@norgine.com](mailto:medinformation@norgine.com)
- PD is characterised by a loss of dopaminergic neurones. Lack of dopamine in the enteric nervous system may explain why patients have a prolonged colonic transit time, and pass infrequent, hard and painful stools. This is thought to be compounded by medications commonly used in the treatment of PD and lack of mobility and exercise.
- In this non-interventional PMS study, chronic constipation was defined as having symptoms of constipation for three months. The mean age was  $73 \pm 9$  years. The mean number of successful defecations increased from  $2.3 \pm 1.1$  per week (pre-treatment) to  $5.3 \pm 1.8$  per week (after eight weeks) and this improvement was maintained throughout the remainder of the study. The proportion of patients achieving two or less successful defecations per week fell from 69 to 5 percent or less from eight weeks onwards.
- For more information on Parkinson's disease visit [www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk) and [www.epda.eu.com](http://www.epda.eu.com)

**References**

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2. Byrne KG et al. J Clin Gastroenterology 1994; 19 (1):11-16
3. Jost WH. Drugs Ageing 1997; 10 (4); 249-258
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