

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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EARLY ONSET PARKINSON'S PATIENTS NEEDED FOR DRUG TRIAL

DALLAS – March 13, 2000 – Basil Tallent, 65, played sports all his life, so when his foot shook as he kicked a soccer ball last year he knew something was wrong.

A visit to his doctor confirmed that, indeed, something was wrong. Tallent was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a progressive neurological disorder.

But Tallent is finding hope in a clinical trial being offered at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. The trial, called the Patch 1 study, tests a novel way to deliver drugs for Parkinson's to the brain. Rather than swallowing pills several times a day, patients apply patches to their chest just once a day. The patches supply a steady stream of a drug to the brain.

Doctors hope to learn from the trial whether this new delivery system can improve the motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease in a consistent, smooth fashion. They hope the continuous delivery of drugs made possible by the patch technology will more closely mimic the brain's own actions better than conventional drug therapies.

"I think we'll find help for me and others," said Tallent, a Bartonville resident.

The death and deterioration of cells in the brain that create dopamine causes Parkinson's disease. Doctors prescribe drugs to replace the brain's dopamine, but the drugs cannot supply the slow and constant supply of dopamine as the brain did. As a result of inconsistent dopamine levels in the brain, the dopamine receptors can be damaged, causing involuntary movements called dyskinesias.

"This is the first drug for Parkinson's to be given in patch form," said Dr. Richard Dewey, assistant professor of neurology. "Patients have a difficult time remembering to take medications three times a day. A common problem with medication for Parkinson's is getting patients to take it consistently and on time."

The patch trial is the first clinical trial for Parkinson's patients offered at UT Southwestern that is being conducted in association with the Parkinson's Study Group (PSG). PSG, a Rochester, N.Y.-based nonprofit group, administers groundbreaking clinical trials for pharmaceutical

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companies at major U.S. academic medical centers.

The trial, now in phase II, involves 28 medical centers and a total of 225 patients. Some patients will receive a placebo.

To qualify for the trial, patients must have early-onset Parkinson's and not have been taking any medications for the illness for more than six months. The 18-week trial will require several clinic visits and medical tests, at no cost to the patient.

The trial is funded in part by Schwarz Pharma, Inc.

For more information, patients should call 214-648-8544.

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