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Skin patch hope for Parkinson's

A new skin patch may offer relief to patients in the early stages of Parkinson's disease.

The Neupro patch, made by Schwarz Pharma, has been licensed for use in the UK.

It delivers a drug that mimics the effects of a naturally occurring brain chemical, which is in short supply in people with Parkinson's.

The Parkinson's Disease Society said the patch may help some manage their symptoms more easily.

Between 8,000 and 10,000 new cases of Parkinson's are diagnosed in the UK every year, with 95% of cases in those aged over 40.

At any one time, 120,000 people in the UK have the condition.

People with the disease have a shortage of the brain chemical dopamine, which controls connections between nerve cells, leading to symptoms such as tremors.

'Useful addition'

Until now, patients have mostly taken a dopamine agonist - an agent that acts directly on the dopamine receptors in the brain - in tablet form, or through injections of through a pump.

The patch contains a new dopamine agonist, called rotigotine, and delivers a continuous dose of the drug over 24 hours, so patients only having to change the patch once a day.

Doctors say it could help people who have problems swallowing pills and those with digestion problems that stop oral drugs being fully absorbed.



People with Parkinson's have too little dopamine in their brains

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“ Trials to date have shown the patch to be safe and effective in early stage Parkinson's patients, and a potential option for long-term benefit ”

Robert Meadowcroft, Parkinson's Disease Society

Robert Meadowcroft, director of policy, campaigns and information at the Parkinson's Disease Society, said: "We are pleased that a new dopamine agonist has been launched as a skin patch for the treatment of early Parkinson's disease.

"Clinical trials to date have shown the patch to be safe and effective in early stage Parkinson's patients, and a potential option for long-term benefit."

He added: "The rotigotine patch is a useful addition to the range of Parkinson's drugs, giving clinicians and patients another treatment option to consider."

Dr Ray Chaudhuri, a consultant neurologist at University Hospital Lewisham, in south London, said: "For clinicians and people with Parkinson's, this is a new and simple way of delivering a dopamine agonist.

"It has the potential to overcome many of the problems associated with oral administration and may well prove to be one of the most effective methods of delivering a steady and continuous dose."

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