New Drug Improves Lung Function in COPD Patients

by YVONNE BANKS

COPD Lung Function Improved With New Drug

An experimental drug for chronic lung disease may help improve chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) lung function, a new study has shown. The drug, from pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, is an injectable respiratory drug designed for pulmonary patients who do not respond to traditional inhalers as they should.

It was produced in hopes of reducing the rate of exacerbations in COPD patients. The studies, which are in the second phase of testing, have produced mixed results so far. The drug, called benralizumab, did not reduce acute exacerbations in COPD patients when administered by injection, like researchers had hoped.

However, participants did show improved lung function from taking injectable benralizumab.

Benralizumab works to deplete a certain type of white blood cell associated with lung disorders. AstraZeneca plans to continue research into benralizumab for treating COPD into the third phase of testing.

The company believes it sees a future for the drug treating COPD, even with the mixed data from phase two.

How COPD Should Be Controlled

It is important to use pharmacological treatment to help control COPD. The Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) advises the following:

- **The treatment should be in stepwise fashion, according to the severity of COPD in a person.** This is not the same thing as the step-down approach used in asthma treatment.
- **The treatment for COPD needs to be chronic.** It must be consistent for long periods, unless there are serious side effects or exacerbations noted.
- **It is imperative that individual patient response be monitored during pharmacological treatment.** It may need to be adjusted frequently depending on the patient's response.

The following drugs are currently used for treatment of COPD:

- Bronchodilators
- Antibiotics
- Vaccines for pneumonia and influenza
- Vasodilators
- Immunoregulators
- Glucocorticoids
- ?1-antitrypsin augmentation therapy
- Mucolytic agents
- Antioxidants

- Antitussives

The drugs are given depending on how severe the patient’s COPD symptoms are. When a treatment regimen is started, it is the physician’s responsibility to ensure it is patient-specific, since everyone is different. The relationship between the severity of the symptoms and lung function is influenced by:

- Frequency and severity of exacerbations
- The presence of complications
- The presence of respiratory failure
- The presence of other diseases
- General health status

In the future, drugs may be produced that will offer improved treatment for COPD, where the disease process itself can be reversed. But in the meantime, patients with COPD should work with their doctors to ensure they receive the best possible treatment that currently exists.