A diagnosis of multiple sclerosis (MS) can be very discouraging. Many with MS begin using an aid to mobility by 45 or 50 with most severe cases being bed-ridden by 60. Current medications do little to slow the advance of MS. Isn’t there something better?

Portland, OR -- A better option may have just shown up as a team of biochemists from the University of Wisconsin-Madison discovered a promising new vitamin D based treatment that can halt and in some cases even reverse the advance of MS.

The treatment has only been tested on mice so far. Researchers gave MS symptom mice a single dose of calcitriol, the active hormone form of vitamin D, followed by ongoing vitamin D supplements through diet. This protocol was previously discussed and published by the *Journal of Neuroimmunology*.

While it is still unclear what really triggers MS, studies have linked the risk of developing the disease to lower levels of vitamin D. The current study compared various vitamin D based treatments to the standard MS drug therapies.

In each case, vitamin D treatments won! Mice that received the treatments showed fewer physical symptoms of the disease. Vitamin D is useful for a variety of ailments as well.

The researchers first compared the effectiveness of a single calcitriol dose to a dose of a current MS drug based on a glucocorticoid. Calcitriol won exhibiting a nine day remission in 92% of mice as opposed to a six day remission in 58% of mice.

Then the team tried a weekly dose of calcitriol. It was found that this dosage reversed the disease and sustained the remission indefinitely.

However calcitriol does carry some strong side effects.

"It's a biological sledgehammer that can raise blood calcium levels," according to Professor Colleen Hayes.

One final regimen was just a single dose of calcitriol, followed by a vitamin D supplement in the diet. This "was a runaway success, as 100% of the mice responded," Hayes said.

While the initial findings are exciting, Hayes cautioned "I think chances are good because we have such a broad foundation of data showing protective effects of vitamin D in humans."
Sounds hopeful!

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Enriching Gifts Oregon

11118 NE Halsey
Portland, OR 97220
8669594369
jan@enrichgifts.com
http://www.enrichgifts.com