**Could this be the end of the inhaler? 'Game-changing' pill for asthma can cut lung inflammation by 80 per cent**

* **British scientists reveal the results of a trial into new drug fevipiprant**
* **Twice-daily tablet shown to improve lung function significantly**
* **Pill could become available on the NHS within three years**

By [BEN SPENCER MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR THE DAILY MAIL](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=&authornamef=Ben+Spencer+Medical+Correspondent+For+The+Daily+Mail)

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A ‘game-changing’ pill for asthma could replace inhalers for millions of sufferers, experts claim.

British scientists last night revealed the results of a trial into fevipiprant, a breakthrough drug that cuts lung inflammation by up to 80 per cent.

The twice-daily tablet, the first to be developed for 20 years, was shown to improve lung function significantly, ease symptoms and repair the lining of damaged airways.

Fevipiprant has even been identified as a promising treatment by the research arm of the NHS, which part-funded the trial on 61 asthma patients.

Further studies are under way, and if those go well scientists think it could be available on the NHS within three years.

Most existing drugs only ease the symptoms of asthma – with certain drugs widening the airways and others using steroids to calm inflammation. Fevipiprant, however, is the first to use a ‘twin attack’ – it blocks inflammatory cells floating in the airway while also treating the airway lining, stopping it from becoming inflamed and repairing any damage.

Researchers tested it on severely ill patients in conjunction with their existing steroids and inhalers, treating them for 12 weeks.

Those tests, published in the Lancet Respiratory Medicine journal last night, showed remarkable results – with inflammation dropping by four-fifths to residual levels usually seen among completely healthy people.

The results offer real hope for the 5.4million people in the UK who have the condition. Three die every day because of asthma attacks – two of which are preventable.

The last tablet for asthma, called montelukast, reduced inflammation but did not prevent severe asthma attacks.

Doctors are desperate to find an effective asthma pill because inhalers are commonly misused, limiting their effectiveness. Up to 68 per cent of patients don’t get the correct dose of medication from their inhalers because they fail to use them properly.

Fevipiprant research leader Professor Chris Brightling, of the University of Leicester, said: ‘This drug could be a game-changer for future treatment of asthma.

‘A unique feature of this study was how it included measurements of symptoms, lung function using breathing tests, sampling of the airway wall and scans of the chest to give a complete picture of how the drug works.

‘Most treatments might improve some of these features, but with fevipiprant improvements were seen with all of the tests.

‘Fevipiprant could help to stop preventable asthma attacks, reduce hospital admissions and improve day-to-day symptoms.’

The drug, which was developed by the pharmaceutical firm Novartis, is already undergoing a larger trial of 846 patients, also led by the Leicester team. That trial also focuses on those most at need, with patients retaining their inhalers. The team hopes to see the number of asthma attacks halved in the 12-month study.

But eventually the researchers want to focus on a group of patients with less severe asthma to see if inhalers could be replaced. Professor Brightling said: ‘It could well be that it could be tested to see if it could replace inhalers.’

Dr Samantha Walker, of the charity Asthma UK, said: ‘This research shows massive promise. The possibility of taking a pill instead of using an inhaler will be a very welcome one.

‘More research is needed, but it’s an exciting development and one which, in the long term, could offer a real alternative to current treatments.’

Dr Matthew Hallsworth, of the NHS National Institute for Health Research, said: ‘It has the potential to improve the quality of lives for millions of people with asthma and could ultimately save lives.’

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3726307/Could-end-inhaler-Game-changing-pill-asthma-cut-lung-inflammation-80-cent.html#ixzz4NQhxOXtY>   
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