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## Shuttle Drug Reported As Anemia Treatment

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 18 -- A mystery drug produced on the space shuttle and said to have the ability to help millions of people was identified by a trade magazine today as erythropoietin, a substance for people who have lost their ability to produce red blood cells.

The McDonnell Douglas Corporation, which has sponsored the research, refused to confirm or deny the report in the magazine Aviation Week and Space Technology.

"A commercial space market worth several hundred million dollars is foreseen for the drug erythropoietin," the magazine said.

A spokesman for McDonnell Douglas, Susan Flowers, also declined to confirm that the 3M Corporation is joining McDonnell Douglas in the venture. 3M's Riker Laboratories Division will market the product in place of Johnson & Johnson's Ortho Pharmaceuticals Division, which recently dropped out of the program, the article said.

"We are working on an agreement to agree," Miss Flowers said.

McDonnell Douglas has used the space shuttle six times for an experiment called electrophoresis, which separates substances in biological materials by passing an electric current through them. An engineer from the firm, Charles D. Walker, has twice flown on the shuttle to work the device and is scheduled to do so again later this month.

People who are anemic or have a variety of disorders in which red blood cell levels are a factor could benefit from erythropoietin. The drug is not widely used because Earth-bound production techniques cannot filter out byproducts harmful to the body.

One use for the space-processed drug would be for patients who are within a few days of surgery, to allow them to build up red blood cells. Another would be for people unable to generate such cells and need frequent transfusions to stay alive.

Erythropoietin, which is produced by the kidneys, stimulates the production of red blood cells, so that people with certain forms of kidney disease often lack the natural hormone to stimulate a continual replenishment.

McDonnell Douglas has refused to identify the drug for proprietary reasons. It has said only that the substance is a hormone.

Aviation Week said human testing will begin soon and that the drug could be available for sale in 1988, pending Food and Drug Administration approval.

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