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**High blood pressure combination pill 'better than one'**

By Helen Briggs Health reporter, BBC News



A combination of drugs is better than a single one in treating high blood pressure, a UK study has suggested.

The study in the Lancet involved 1,200 people and found starting treatment with two drugs gave better and faster results, with fewer side effects.

The approach challenges conventional medical practice where doctors give a patient one drug, then add another later if blood pressure stays high.

Almost 10 million people in the UK have high blood pressure.

Treatment with anti-hypertensive drugs is known to reduce the risk of stroke and heart disease.

A team led by researchers at the University of Cambridge, University of Glasgow and University of Dundee followed 1,254 patients with high blood pressure in 10 countries.

They compared the effects of giving one drug (either aliskiren or amlodipine) or a combination of both.

Patients given the combination of drugs had a 25% better response during the first six months compared with those on conventional treatment, the study found.

This equates to a 6.5mm Hg greater reduction in systolic blood pressure.

Participants were also less likely to stop taking their medication due to side effects.

The two drugs can be given as a single pill, making it easier for patients to take.

Professor Morris Brown of the University of Cambridge said the study "breaks the mould for treating hypertension".

He said: "Most patients can now be prescribed a single combination pill and know that they are optimally protected from strokes and heart attacks."

The British Heart Foundation, which is funding follow-up research, said good control of blood pressure is hard to achieve in many patients.

Associate medical director Professor Jeremy Pearson said: "This study adds significantly to the evidence that starting treatment for patients with high blood pressure with two medicines rather than one is safe, and more effective than waiting to add the second medicine later."

The research was funded by the pharmaceutical company Novartis, which makes amlodipine and aliskiren.

The combination pill was approved by the FDA for use in the US last year.

The Express

January 13, 2011 Thursday   
U.K. 1st Edition

**Blood pressure pill to cut 5,000 strokes a year**  
**BYLINE:** By Victoria Fletcher  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; 15  
  
**LENGTH:** 612 words

A NEW two-in-one pill for treating high blood pressure could prevent 5,000 strokes a year, a study suggests.

The discovery could herald the start of a new era in managing the condition, known as hypertension, which affects more than 10 million Britons.

Professor Morris Brown, of the University of Cambridge and Addenbrooke's Hospital, said: "This study breaks the mould for treating hypertension.

"Most patients can now be prescribed a single combination pill and know that they are optimally protected from strokes and heart attacks."

At present, patients with high blood pressure are given a single drug at a very low dose.

This can slowly be increased if it fails to have an impact and other drugs can be added but it means it can take months for patients to reach their optimum blood pressure levels and many complain of side effects.

It also creates a delay during which some patients may suffer a heart attack or stroke.

The latest study, published in The Lancet medical journal, shows that patients started on the combined drugs reduced their blood pressure quickly and also suffered fewer side effects.

The study was carried out at Cambridge University in collaboration with the Universities of Dundee and Glasgow, and the British Hypertension Society.

Professor Tom MacDonald, of Dundee University, said: "The research is a great result for patients with high blood pressure.

Starting with two medicines is clearly better than starting with one and there were fewer side effects."

The study of 1,250 patients showed that those given a single tablet containing a combination of drugs had a 25 per cent better response during the first six months of treatment than patients on conventional doses.

The pill combines the drugs amlodipine and aliskiren.

It means patients receive double the usual dose of blood pressure medication.

The team found that blood pressure readings for those on conventional treatment never caught up with those on the new treatment, even when they were all treated with the same combination of drugs.

This is because the body may become resistant to a single drug but does not when two are combined.

Professor Jeremy Pearson, of the British Heart Foundation, said: "This study adds significantly to the evidence that starting treatment for patients with high blood pressure with two medicines rather than one is safe, and more effective than waiting to add the second medicine later."

Q&A

What is high blood pressure?

Pressure of blood in the arteries builds up to unsafe levels known as hypertension.

A reading of more than 140/90 mmHg is considered high.

How many people have it?

About 10 million.

Why is it dangerous?

It raises the chances of suffering a heart attack or stroke.

What causes it?

There are a range of causes.

For a few people, hypertension results from a medical condition such as a hormone imbalance or kidney problems.

For the vast majority, it is the consequence of poor diet, too much salt, a lack of exercise, smoking and drinking too much alcohol.

Blood pressure also rises as we age.

What are the symptoms?

Very few obvious effects so hypertension is usually spotted during a routine GP visit when an inflatable arm cuff is used.

Can it be cured?

No. But there are a range of drug treatments including angiotensin receptor blockers, calcium channel blockers and diuretics.

Patients often take a combination of pills.

Anything else people can do?

Get to a healthy weight and slash salt intake.

Studies suggest that tens of thousands of lives would be saved.

People are advised to eat no more than six grammes of salt a day but most eat far more and convenience food products often contain high levels.

Eating more fruit and vegetables will also help.

MAIL ON SUNDAY (London)

January 23, 2011 Sunday

**LENGTH:** 403 words

**NEW 2-IN-1 PILLS GO TO THE HEART OF HYPERTENSION**

MAIL ON SUNDAY REPORTER

A combination pill has been shown to be far more effective than stand-alone blood pressure medicines, a new study has found.

The trial involving 1,250 patients found that using two drugs Ð aliskiren and amlodipine Ð in a single tablet improved speed and effectiveness of the treatment, with fewer side effects.

Almost ten million people in the UK are believed to have hypertension, or high blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart attacks and stroke.

Normally doctors treat patients with hypertension initially with one drug while other medicines are added if needed over a period of months.

However, the latest research suggests that it is best to start treatment with two medicines at the same time.

Experts at Cambridge University found that the combination treatment produces a 25 per cent better response in patients than conventional monotherapy.

The findings, published in the medical journal The Lancet, were welcomed by doctors. Cardiologist Professor Graham MacGregor, of the Blood Pressure Association, says: 'Aliskiren is a new drug but there are a number of combination pills already available to patients.

This study suggests they are more effective than single drugs, if started straight away, and doctors should consider prescribing them.

'The other benefits of combination therapy is lower prescription costs and one less pill for patients to remember to take.'

Lead researcher Professor Morris Brown, from Cambridge University, says: 'This study breaks the mould for hypertension.

Most patients can be prescribed a single combination pill and know they are protected from stroke and heart attacks.'

The scientists suspect taking the drugs in series allows the body to neutralise each of them in turn.

Having them together may prevent this from happening.

Professor Bryan Williams, from the British Hypertension Society, said: 'The findings could change the way we approach the treatment of high blood pressure.'

**REUTERS**

**Study backs Novartis hypertension drug combination**

By Kate Kelland

Patients with high blood pressure treated with a combination of a Novartis ([NOVN.VX](http://uk.reuters.com/business/quotes/overview?symbol=NOVN.VX)) hypertension drug and a generic medicine do better than if they take only one of the drugs alone, trial data released on Thursday showed.

The results of a study known as ACCELERATE also showed that patients who switched from single drug treatment to combined therapy improved their response, but not to the same level as those who started their treatment with the combination.

The findings, by researchers at the Swiss drugmaker and at Britain's University of Cambridge, could boost prospects for Novartis's Tekamlo tablet, a single-pill treatment which combines the two drugs tested -- aliskiren, also made by Novartis, and the generic blood pressure medicine amlodipine.

"One of the benefits we think will come out of this research is that patients should now receive combination therapy from the start (of their treatment)," said Morris Brown at Cambridge University, who led the study.

Experts not directly involved in the research, which was published in The Lancet medical journal, agreed and said treatment guidelines should now be changed.

"ACCELERATE puts into proper context the importance of starting with combination antihypertensives to lower blood pressure towards guideline goals for the general population ... A change in guidelines is clearly necessary," Ivana Lazich and George Bakris of the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine in the United States wrote in a commentary.

Aliskiren, sold under the brand names Tekturna and Rasilez, had global sales for Novartis of $290 million in 2009.

It was launched in 2007 after it was found in clinical trials to lower blood pressure better than an ACE inhibitor, one of the types of drugs currently given to heart attack patients.

Tekturna's success is crucial for Novartis since Diovan, also a high blood pressure treatment, loses patent protection in 2012.

The combination pill Tekamlo was approved in August last year by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. [ID:nLDE67Q05M]

An estimated 1 billion people globally have high blood pressure, or hypertension, which is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death globally.

If left untreated high blood pressure can cause strokes, heart attacks, heart failure and organ damage, including kidney failure and vision problems.

In Brown's study, all patients had high systolic blood pressure of between 150 and 180 mm Hg.

Normal blood pressure is usually below 140 mm Hg systolic.

The researchers compared patients given either aliskiren alone, amlodipine alone, or a combination of both for 16 weeks.

After the first 16 weeks, those on single drugs switched to the combination and those taking the combination continued doing so.

The researchers found that patients given initial combination therapy had an average of 6.5 mm Hg greater reduction in mean systolic blood pressure than those taking the single drugs. At 24 weeks, when all patients were on combination treatment, the difference had decreased to 1.4 mm Hg.

Side effects such oedema or fluid retention and low blood pressure occurred at similar rates in both groups, with between 14 and 18 percent of patients stopping treatment as a result. (Editing by Greg Mahlich)

TELEGRAPH

By [Rebecca Smith](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/rebecca-smith/), Medical Editor

8:15AM GMT 13 Jan 2011

**Two blood pressure drugs better than one: research**

**Patients with high blood pressure should be prescribed a combination drug because it is 25 per cent more effective than the traditional treatment, researchers have discovered.**

The results "break the mould" for treating high blood pressure and are likely to change the way doctors treat the condition, the Cambridge University researchers said.

Patients with very high blood pressure - a major risk factor for heart attacks and strokes - often need more than one drug over a period of months to control it.

However the new study found it is best to start treatment with two medicines together as this reduces blood pressure by 25 per cent compared to using one drug at a time.

This results in much faster and more effective control of blood pressure, with fewer side effects, they said.

Professor Morris Brown, from Cambridge University, who led the trial, said: "The Accelerate study breaks the mould for treating hypertension (high blood pressure).

Most patients can now be prescribed a single combination pill and know that they are optimally protected from strokes and heart attacks."

Professor Bryan Williams, from the British Hypertension Society, said: "This study is important and the findings could change the way we approach the treatment of high blood pressure."

The research, which involved 1,250 patients with high blood pressure, is published in an early online edition of *The Lancet* medical journal.

It shows that starting treatment with the two drugs aliskiren and amlodipine in a combination pill reduced blood pressure on average by 25 per cent more than one drug.

The scientists suspect taking the drugs in series allows the body to neutralise each of them in turn. Having them together may prevent this from happening.

Professor Jeremy Pearson, associate medical director at the British Heart Foundation, said: “This study adds significantly to the evidence that starting treatment for patients with high blood pressure with two medicines rather than one is safe, and more effective than waiting to add the second medicine later.

“Good control of blood pressure is still hard to achieve in many patients.

So the BHF is currently funding follow-up trials to this research that will find out the best way to treat patients whose hypertension is still poorly controlled with two drugs, and who need extra medicines.”

Almost 10 million people in the UK are believed to have high blood pressure.