Aspirin-like Drug Could Help Control Diabetes

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anead@tulane.edu
504-247-1443

Researchers at Tulane University School of Medicine are participating in a national study testing the ability of a generic drug called salsalate to control diabetes.

The multi-site study is led by the Joslin Diabetes Center, Boston, with 17 institutions around the country, including Tulane, involved in clinical testing of the drug. The study"s current results are published in the March 16 edition of *The Annals of Internal Medicine*.

“Salsalate been prescribed for the joint pain of arthritis for many years,” says Dr. Vivian Fonseca, Tullis-Tulane Alumni Chair in Diabetes; chief, Section of Endocrinology; and principal investigator for the study at Tulane. “It is an anti-inflammatory agent that is chemically similar to aspirin, but it is easier on the stomach.”

The three-month-long trial, funded by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health, tracked responses to salsalate by more than 100 individuals aged from 17 to 75 years. Patients who took the drug showed significantly improved blood glucose levels, an indication that salsalate may be beneficial in controlling diabetes.

“This is an important study for several reasons,” says Fonseca. “First, it represents a novel twist to what has been described in the literature for years as a "side effect" â ?? this drug can cause low blood sugars in people with diabetes who take it along with other medications. We are turning this "side effect" into a benefit in helping patients with diabetes control their disease. Second, similar drugs were used to treat diabetes over a century ago in Germany before the discovery of insulin and other drugs. We have "rediscovered" the concept but have now applied it in a modern scientific manner in a properly conducted clinical trial.”

With continued funding from the NIH, the team is moving ahead with a second

clinical trial. Volunteers are being recruited for this stage, which will study efficacy and safety of salsalate in a larger group for a longer period of time. Those interested in participating in the study should call Connie Tompkins, 504-988-4651.