

New drug controls psoriasis

A new drug tested at the University of Michigan is a major advance in the treatment of the skin disorder psoriasis.

"The worse the patient's psoriasis, the more effective the drug appears to be," said Dr. Charles N. Ellis, co-principal investigator.

Testing by researchers at the U-M Medical Center has shown that the drug, etretinate (pronounced "ET-ree-tin-ale"), is a major advance in the treatment of severe psoriasis.

THE FEDERAL Food and Drug Administration recently approved the drug for use by physicians across the country.

Approval followed studies at the U-M Medical Center and other major tests by the University of Utah, Northwestern University and the University of California at Los Angeles.

Etretinate has undergone seven years of clinical research by faculty at the U-M Medical School.

"This is a powerful drug that represents a substantial advance in the treatment of our patients with severe, recalcitrant psoriasis," said Dr. John J. Voorhees, chairman of dermatology and co-principal investigator in the U-M Medical Center study.

PSORIASIS is a disorder of the skin that causes scaly, red patches.

Severe psoriasis is a chronic skin disease that causes reddening, scabbing, itching, and pus formation all over the body and can be life-threatening.

Etretinate therapy is designed for patients with this type of the disease, who cannot be improved satisfactorily by standard therapies. However, until now, severe psoriasis has been extremely difficult to treat.

Severe psoriasis affects approximately 5 to 10 percent of persons with psoriasis in the United States. About 500,000 to one million individuals may be eligible for the new drug.

"SINCE ETRETINATE does not represent a cure for psoriasis," Dr. Voorhees said, "we will continue to use it in combination with other older forms of treatment."

Traditional treatments for severe psoriasis include coal tar products, steroid creams, ultra-violet light and methotrexate.

Etretinate, which will be available only by prescription, should be in pharmacies by December. It is manufactured by Hoffmann-La Roche Inc. of Nutley, N.J.

Patients wanting further information about etretinate should call the U-M at 764-2225 in Ann Arbor.

SIDE EFFECTS from the new drug, such as, are not listed in the blood, can be controlled by diet.

"A young woman capable of bearing children may not take the drug unless she is practicing completely effective contraception," Dr. Voorhees said.

Of the more than 50 patients in the U-M study, all had been in the hospital at least twice each year for three and four weeks at a time for clearance of severe psoriasis using standard treatments.

Since using the drug, only one patient in the U-M study has been hospitalized for psoriasis.

Joe Blauevelt of Ypsilanti was told of the potential side effects when he went to the U-M Dermatology Department for treatment when the study began, but for him there was only one choice.

"They say psoriasis won't kill you, but if you have it, you wish you were dead," Blauevelt said. "That pretty much sums it up for me. I was one big sore from head to toe. At that point, I would try anything."

Seven years later, all that is left of Blauevelt's psoriasis are a few small painless spots on his arms. "Without this drug, I wouldn't have been able to work or do anything," Blauevelt said. "It has been very helpful."

U-M scholar is Lincoln president

Dr. Niara Sudarkasa of the University of Michigan has been named president of Lincoln University of Pennsylvania, the board of trustees announced.

Dr. Sudarkasa, 46, is an associate vice president for academic affairs at U-M, where she is also a professor of anthropology. She was selected from a field of 103.

Lincoln University, the oldest of the historically black colleges, was founded as an all male institution in 1854. A century later, it amended its charter to grant degrees to women students.

As an anthropologist, she is best known for her work on the role of women in West Africa, where she has done extensive field work. In 1982, she received a Senior Fulbright Research Fellowship for study in West Africa.

"A proud tradition of higher education for blacks began on this campus more than 130 years ago. It is a tradition in which I believe deeply," said Sudarkasa.

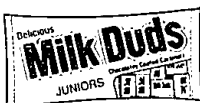
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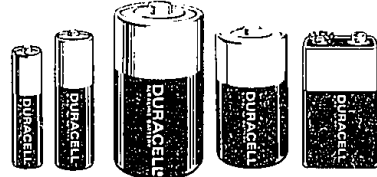
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