Diabetes Drug May Help Treat Non-Alcoholic Liver Disease

May 18, 2015

An investigational anti-diabetes drug may be an option for treating non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). Researchers conducted a trial of 336 treatment-naive people with type 2 diabetes and an A1C between 7.0 percent and 9.5 percent. They presented their findings as at the 50th International Liver Congress in Vienna, Austria.

The higher the A1C level, the greater the chance that someone will develop complications as a result of diabetes. People with diabetes are generally advised to shoot for a level lower than 7.0 percent.

The participants were equally randomized to receive either the anti-diabetic treatment remogliflozin etabonate at 50, 100, 250, 500 or 1,000 milligrams twice daily; a matching placebo; or 30 mg of another diabetes treatment, pioglitazone, once daily.

After 12 weeks of treatment, remogliflozin etabonate improved insulin sensitivity by 6 to 33 percent and beta cell function by 23 to 43 percent. Those who took this drug also lost between 1.4 and 3.6 kilograms (3 to 8 pounds) of body weight when compared with those taking the placebo. Participants taking remogliflozin etabonate who had elevated alanine aminotransferase (ALT, an enzyme) levels—which can indicate liver injury—experienced statistically significant reductions of 32 to 42 percent in those levels after 12 weeks of treatment, when compared with those taking the placebo.

“NAFLD and NASH are both closely associated with diabetes and obesity, and together are now considered the No. 1 cause of liver disease in Western countries. Consequently there is an urgent need for effective treatment options for these diseases. We know that NASH is due, in part, to insulin resistance and oxidative stress resulting from steatosis. Given the mode of action of remogliflozin etabonate, it could potentially offer benefits when treating patients with both NASH and NAFLD,” Markus Peck, MD, secretary general of the European Association for the Study of the Liver, said in a press release.

To read the press release, click here.