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# Parkinson’s drug found to ease early symptoms

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TORONTO STAR

A drug imported from Hungary by celebrity millionaire Dr. Morton Shulman delays disabling symptoms of Parkinson’s disease, a research study shows.

It is not clear, however, whether the drug deprenyl, approved for use in Canada last April, treats the underlying cause of the disease, according to study results published in yesterday’s *New England Journal of Medicine*.

"Our results don’t give us a firm answer," said Dr. Anthony Lang, director of the Movement Disorders Clinic at the Toronto Hospital, one of 28 medical centres involved in the continuing study.

"This does tell us that deprenyl does have the ability to improve symptoms in the earliest stages of this disease."

It is sold in Canada by Deprenyl Research Ltd., set up by Shulman in 1987. Shulman, 68, has had the neurological disease for almost 10 years.

At least 70,000 Canadians have Parkinson’s disease, which results from the destruction of brain cells that produce the chemical dopamine. Sufferers have symptoms of uncontrollable shaking and slow, halting movements that get progressively worse.

In 1989, the same team of Canadian and American researchers announced interim results that showed deprenyl delayed the deve-

lopment of severe symptoms.

At the time, researchers suggested these promising results might be because the drug prevented brain cells from being destroyed but it now appears more likely that the drug simply eases symptoms.

In the study published yesterday, patients who received 10 milligrams of deprenyl daily went for about 24 months before needing other drugs to control symptoms.

Patients who did not receive deprenyl needed the symptom-controlling drugs within 15 months of being diagnosed, according to the study of 800 with early symptoms.

**REFERENCE:** The Parkinson Study Group (W. Koller *et al.*) – I. Shoulson *et al.*: Effects of tocopherol and deprenyl on the progression of disability in early Parkinson’s disease. *New Engl. J. Med.* **328**(#3): 176-183 (1993). [DC Library call number: PER R11.B7]

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