

The Memory Practice Newsletter

Issue 22, October 2008



In this issue Dr. Michelon tells you about Alzheimer's Disease treatment.

Visit our website

www.thememorypractice.com

And learn about how to:

- Exercise your brain at home
- Organize a brain support group for your residents

A Russian Antihistamine Drug to stop Alzheimer's?

Have you heard about Dimebon?

Not long ago this old Russian antihistamine drug has been shown to stop the cognitive and behavioral symptoms of people with Alzheimer's.

What is the scientific value of this study? What are the hopes?

The Russian Study

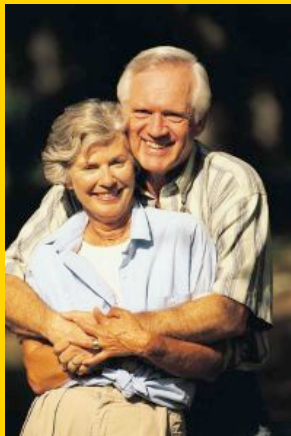
The original study was of medium size: It involved **183 Alzheimer's patients** in 11 centers in Russia. The patients randomly received either a placebo or Dimebon at a dose of 10mg for 1 week and then at 20mg three times a day for 26 weeks.

At the end of the 26 weeks, the patients who had received Dimebon scored better, compared to their scores before receiving the drug, **on standards tests used to assess cognitive symptoms of Alzheimer's** (e.g., Mini-Mental State Examination, Alzheimer's disease assessment scale). Importantly, patients who received the placebo continued to decline: Their scores at the end of the 26 weeks were worse than their scores before the study began.

86% of the patients enrolled in a 26 weeks extension phase of the study. At 52 weeks, the scores obtained by patients taking Dimebon were still better than their scores before the study began. The difference between these patients and those taking the placebo continued to increase.

What make this study different from other studies?

First, the difference in scores between the patients treated with Dimebon and the patients who received the placebo was the largest ever seen in an Alzheimer's clinical trial. Second, the side effects of Dimebon were very small. The most frequent adverse effect was dry mouth!



At The Memory Practice we develop brain exercises to help adults boost their memory and keep their brain fit.

Our exercises target all brain functions including memory. They are stimulating and fun.

With our Home Program **brain exercises are sent directly to your home.**

Contact us to set up a **FREE assessment** for your client, your loved one or for yourself!

(314) 726 - 5105

thememorypractice@yahoo.com

Will Dimebon be available soon?

It seems that the FDA will consider approval of Dimebon if one more study confirms the results obtained in Russia in a different and at least partly U.S.-based patient population. A larger clinical trial is already under way in more than a dozen European, North American and South American hospitals. It aims at enrolling 525 patients. If after 6 months the results prove to be positive, the FDA will accept the drug into its marketing approval process. That could happen as early as next year.

Caution notes

1- A "Russian" study?

As you can imagine, the scientific community was at first very skeptical. However, the study was designed and evaluated by three American Alzheimer's researchers who trained the relevant Russian hospital staff.

2- Methodological issues.

The patients in that study were younger than patients in traditional clinical trials in the US. However the deterioration shown by the patients in the placebo group was comparable with the one seen in previously published studies.

3- Nobody really knows how Dimebon works.

Dimebon is not used as an antihistaminic drug anymore, even in Russia. Its antihistaminic properties are not relevant for Alzheimer's anyway.

The cognitive improvement triggered by the drug may result from either boosting the brain systems that use acetylcholine (a neurotransmitter) or by blocking the brain systems that use NMDA receptors (a type of brain-cell receptor). Another hypothesis is that Dimebon may enhance neuronal function through its effect on mitochondria (the cells' power sources).

4- Does Dimebon cure Alzheimer's?

It is not known whether Dimebon stops the brain deterioration or merely treats the symptoms for a while as the other existing drugs do.