



Gut Reaction

The Journal of the IBS Network

By and for people with Irritable Bowel Syndrome

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UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS HAVE BEEN PUTTING TO THE TEST A NEW DIETARY

PRODUCT THAT OFFERS HOPE OF MANAGING IBS SYMPTOMS



Some time ago members of the IBS Network participated in a clinical trial testing a neuroceutical product, IntestAidB. **Christine Dancey**, (left) who conducted the research, puts the work in context and presents her trial results.

My team of researchers at the University of East London looked at the effect of the supplement IntestAidB on people with IBS. IntestAidB contains nucleotides, substances produced in the body that have important effects on the growth and development of cells which have a rapid turnover, such as those in the immune system and the gastrointestinal tract.

In healthy people, additional nucleotides in the form of a supplement are probably not essential – most will be metabolised and rapidly excreted from the body. However, when people are unwell nucleotides might optimise the function of the gastrointestinal and immune system. Nucleotides are found in many foods – lamb, liver and mushrooms are rich in nucleotides.

Work with infants had shown that the incidence and duration of acute diarrhoea is lower when dietary nucleotides were included in their diets.

My team wanted to test whether a nucleotide

supplement could help people with IBS, who had diarrhoea as a symptom. We carried out a double-blind randomised placebo trial. The capsules, taken three times a day, were simply labelled "A" or "B". People kept a daily diary of their symptoms for four weeks without taking any capsules, then for 8 weeks (either IntestAidB or placebo); a four week "washout" period, and then a further 8 weeks (either IntestAidB or placebo).

Participants filled in questionnaires three times during the study, measuring depression, anxiety, general health and illness intrusiveness. Blood tests measured their cholesterol levels.

When we analysed the results for the sample as a whole, we found that six of the seven symptoms

we were really interested in (abdominal pain, urgency to have a bowel movement, a feeling of incomplete evacuation, diarrhoea, flatulence and bloating) were all improved by taking the supplement compared to both the placebo capsules and the first four weeks of the trial when no capsules were taken.

What psychologists and other health professionals need to know though is whether the symptoms showed (statistically) significant improvement over the placebo. Although all the symptoms (except constipation) showed improvement relative to the placebo, only abdominal pain, urgency to have a bowel movement and a feeling of incomplete evacuation were "significantly different".

Of course, these are results for the sample as a whole. Some people improved considerably – some hardly improved at all, and not everyone showed improvements in all symptoms. However, this is true of drug trials as well.

A benefit of the neuroceutical product is that there are no known side-effects. It has been said that symptom improvements in clinical trials could be due to a decrease in anxiety and depression due to being in a clinical trial (eg having the researcher to talk to and feeling that someone is interested in you!) but our results showed depression, anxiety and the other psychological measures didn't differ across the trial.

These findings have been published in *Nutrition Journal** this year. As this is the first clinical trial of this product with people with IBS, it needs replicating to ensure results are consistent. We also hope, in the future, to test this supplement in people with much more severe IBS, and also in people with Inflammatory Bowel Disease. For those of you who were in the trial - thank you for spending so long filling in questionnaires and diaries, and for those of you who improved - we hope you continue to do so!

* Dancey, C.P., Attree, E.A. & Brown, K.F. (2006) 'Nucleotide supplementation: a randomised double-blind placebo controlled trial of IntestAidB in people with Irritable Bowel Syndrome' [ISRCTN67764449]. *Nutrition Journal*, 5:16

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- The journal is mailed directly to 3,000 members nationwide, read by a wide variety of health professionals, used by self-help groups and sent out in response to enquiries from the general public, the media and health authorities.
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