CHIEF-PD

Falls are a common and serious problem for people living with Parkinson's disease. They can lead to injuries, loss of confidence, reduced independence, and a lower quality of life. Earlier, smaller studies suggested that rivastigmine, a medication sometimes used to treat memory and thinking problems, might help reduce falls in people with Parkinson's disease. The CHIEF-PD study was carried out to find out whether rivastigmine could safely reduce falls in a larger group of people with Parkinson's disease who had experienced at least one fall in the previous year.

The study involved 600 participants from 38 NHS hospitals across the UK. To make the comparison fair, a computer randomly assigned participants to one of two groups. One group received rivastigmine patches, while the other received identical placebo (dummy) patches. Neither the participants nor the researchers knew which treatment each person was receiving during the study. Participants were followed for 12 months and recorded any falls they experienced in monthly diaries. By collecting information throughout the year, we were able to build a detailed picture of each participant's experience and compare fall rates between the two groups as accurately as possible.

The results showed that rivastigmine did not reduce the number of falls compared with placebo. The treatment also did not improve other important aspects of Parkinson's disease, such as walking speed, thinking abilities, freezing of gait, or overall disease symptoms. Rivastigmine was generally safe, and serious side effects related to the treatment were very uncommon. These findings suggest that rivastigmine should not be routinely used to prevent falls in people with Parkinson's disease who do not have dementia. The study also highlighted that falls in Parkinson's are complex and are unlikely to be prevented by a single treatment alone. Future research should focus on more personalised approaches that combine different strategies to reduce falls and help people live well with Parkinson's disease.