

## More use of clot-busting drugs could save victims of stroke

Many more stroke victims could be saved from disability because clot-breaking drugs can be used for longer than previously thought, scientists say.

There is currently a four-and-a-half-hour window after stroke for administering the drugs, known as thrombolysis. Researchers at Edinburgh University found that the most widely used clot-busting drug, rt-PA, was effective up to six hours after a stroke caused by a blood clot in the brain. These "ischemic" strokes starve a part of the brain of oxygen, causing

disability or death. Every year about 150,000 people suffer a stroke, while about 500,000 are thought to be living with disabilities such as partial paralysis caused by one.

In a study of more than 3,000 patients, they also found the drug could safely be used on those over 80. At the moment it is usually restricted to under-80s.

Previous research suggested that, for every 1,000 patients given the intravenous drug within three hours of stroke, 80 more would survive and be able to live independently than if they had not received it.



# New drug trial brings hope to stroke patients

By **Rod Mills**  
Chief Reporter

A MAJOR trial of a drug for stroke sufferers by Scottish scientists could pave the way for more people being given the life-saving treatment.

Researchers at Edinburgh University found that patients given the clot-busting rt-PA within six hours of a stroke were more likely to make a better recovery than those who did not get the drug.

The £5million study, involving more than 3,000 patients, was the world's largest trial of the drug, which is given intravenously to patients who have suffered an acute ischaemic stroke.

Last year 4,598 Scots died of the condition, the country's second biggest killer after heart attacks.

## Damage

The drug is currently licensed only for people aged under 80, but the trial found it was just as effective in older stroke victims.

Following treatment with rt-PA, scientists discovered that more stroke survivors were able to look after themselves.

A patient's chances of making a complete recovery within six months were also increased.

An ischaemic stroke is caused by the brain's blood supply being interrupted by a blood clot. The damage caused can be permanent or fatal.

Researchers now know that for every 1,000 patients given rt-PA within three hours of a stroke, 80 more will survive and go on to live unaided. However, around one in

25 patients will die within a week of treatment because the drug can cause a secondary bleed in the brain.

But stroke experts stressed that without treatment, one third of victims would die, with another third permanently disabled.

Chief investigator Professor Peter Sandercock, of Edinburgh University's Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, said: "We know the clot-busting treatment works for a few people – younger people who get to hospital within an hour or two of having a stroke – and we wanted to find out if a wider range of people could benefit, particularly people over 80.

"About 30,000 people a year over the age of 80 have a stroke in the UK, and we are not allowed to treat them because this drug isn't licensed to use in people

over 80. Our trial shows that it is crucial that treatment is given as fast as possible."

Professor Sandercock said the results of the study, which involved stroke patients across 156 hospitals in 12 countries between 2000 and 2011 were of "global significance".

Professor Sandercock said: "If you can get treatment within three hours, the benefits are huge. People over 80 benefit as

much as younger people."

He added that there was now hope that drugs companies would seek a licence allowing the drug to be administered to stroke patients over the age of 80.

The Medical Research Council, Health Foundation UK, and Stroke Association UK funded the study. The findings were published in the *Lancet* yesterday.



Professor Peter Sandercock



# Clot-buster drug can save stroke victims

by **JEN LAVERY**

STROKE victims given a clot-busting drug after an attack recover better than those who do not receive the treatment, the biggest study of its kind has found.

More than 3,000 patients worldwide took part in the trial of rt-PA, given to patients who have had acute ischaemic stroke, which occurs when an artery carrying blood to the brain is blocked.

The damage can be permanent or fatal, with problems including paralysis down

one side of the body and slurred speech. The international trial, led by Edinburgh University, found that following treatment with the drug, more stroke survivors were able to look after themselves.

A patient's chances of completely recovering within six months were also increased. For every 1,000 patients given rt-PA within three hours of stroke, 80 more will survive than if they had not been given the drug, according to the research published in The Lancet journal.

Without treatment with rt-PA, one third of stroke victims die and another third are left permanently dependent and disabled.

For those who do not experience bleeding, the drug improves patients' longer term recovery.

The study involved stroke patients in 12 countries between 2000 and 2011.

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## Clot-busting drug aids stroke victims

STROKE victims given a clot-busting drug after an attack recover better than those who do not receive the treatment, according to the world's biggest trial of the medicine.

More than 3000 patients worldwide took part in the trial of rt-PA, given intravenously to patients who have had an acute ischaemic stroke, which occurs when an artery that carries blood to the brain is blocked.

The damage can be permanent or fatal, with problems including paralysis down one side of the body and speech problems.

The international trial, led by the University of Edinburgh, found that following treatment with the drug, more stroke survivors were able to look after themselves.

A patient's chances of completely recovering within six months of a stroke were also increased.

For every 1000 patients given rt-PA within three hours of stroke, 80 more will survive and live without help from others than if they had not been given the drug, according to the research.

But patients are also at risk of death within seven days of treatment as the drug can cause a secondary bleed in the brain.

Without rt-PA treatment one-third of people who have a stroke die and another third are left permanently dependent and disabled.

For those who do not experience bleeding, the drug improves patients' longer-term recovery.



# Clot-busting drug helps recovery from stroke

**NATALIE WALKER**

STROKE patients given a new clot-busting drug after an attack are more likely to make a better recovery than those who do not take it, research has found.

An international trial, led by Edinburgh University, discovered more stroke survivors who took the drug were able to look after themselves than those who had not been given it.

The chances of making a complete recovery within six months of a stroke were also increased.

More than 7,000 patients took part in the world's largest ever study into the drug called rt-PA, which is given intravenously to people who have suffered an acute ischemic stroke.

A stroke occurs when the brain's blood supply is interrupted by a blood clot. The damage caused can be fatal or leave permanent damage, such as paralysis down one side of the body or speech problems.

Researchers found that out of every 1,000 patients given rt-PA within three hours of a stroke, 80 more survived and lived without help from others than if they had not been given the drug, according to the research.

But the experts warned the breakthrough drug was not without risk – patients could die within a week of taking the drug, which can sometimes cause a secondary bleed in the brain.

About 12,500 people have a stroke in Scotland every year and a quarter of them are under the age of 65.



## Clot drug 'helps stroke recovery'

Stroke victims given a clot-busting drug after an attack recover better than those who do not receive the treatment, according to the world's biggest trial of the medicine.

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The damage can be permanent or fatal, with problems including paralysis down one side of the body and speech problems.

The international trial, led by the University of Edinburgh, found that following treatment with the drug, more stroke survivors could look after themselves. A patient's chances of fully recovering within six months of a stroke were also increased.

