

Epilepsy drug could protect nerves from damage in MS

A drug currently used to treat epilepsy could be used to protect cells in the optic nerve for people with all types of MS.

An epilepsy pill called Phenytoin might be effective in protecting nerve cells in the brain against disease processes during MS. Blurred vision is a common problem for people with MS, which usually is the result of inflammation of brain visual wirings (optic nerve). The inflammation can gradually cause death of visual cells which contributes to long-standing visual problems. Researchers have shown that Phenytoin, which they administered in parallel to approved medications for MS, can protect brain visual pathways from death (neurodegeneration).

This study was a phase-2 trial with only a short follow-up, which means the next stage of research will be to prove the effectiveness of this proposed drug in a larger number of people. However, the results are promising to introduce new therapies that can keep brain cells healthy. Furthermore, developing a drug from scratch is a painstaking process that can take decades to get from laboratories to trials. Here, researchers used a drug already available in the market, which shortens this time dramatically.

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