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New Multiple Sclerosis Vaccine

PORTLAND, Ore. (Ivanhoe Broadcast News) -- Multiple sclerosis short-circuits the wiring in the brain, causing loss of feeling, vision problems, fatigue and weakness for about 400,000 Americans. Now a new vaccine is showing promise.

Sue Carlson works up to 12 hours a day helping others feel better. But four years ago, she could barely muster enough energy to work a half day. Multiple sclerosis weakened the entire right side of her body. "I had to move a body part predominantly with my left side and prop it on pillows or towels or blankets in order to do the work I needed to do," she says.

But after six months on an experimental vaccine called NeuroVax, her strength came back. "And it just kept getting better and better and better."



NeuroVax works by increasing the number of disease-fighting white blood cells in the immune system. It did that for all 40 patients who received it. Unlike standard treatments, which have to be given daily or weekly, the vaccine only has to be given once a month, and it doesn't cause flu-like side effects.

"What patients want are treatments that are not only effective, but also aren't not impacting their quality of life because of side effects," Neurologist Dennis Bourdette, M.D., of Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, tells Ivanhoe.

Researchers say the results are encouraging, but larger studies are needed before it can be approved.

Neurologist Arthur Vandembark, Ph.D., also of Oregon Health & Science University and Portland V.A. Medical Center, says, "We still have to have a large enough trial that goes on for a minimum of two years where we see a difference between the vaccinated patients and the control group or the placebo group."

After a year without an injection, Carlson is waiting for a new trial to begin, hoping that another dose of the vaccine will give her even more strength.

Patients say the only side effect of the vaccine is a sore arm.

This article was reported by Ivanhoe.com, who offers Medical Alerts by e-mail every day of the week. To subscribe, go to: <http://www.ivanhoe.com/newsalert/>.



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