

Cogane, a new BDNF inducer, enters the drug pipeline for HD

A new BDNF inducer has entered the drug pipeline for Huntington's Disease. Phytopharm, a pharmaceutical firm located in the UK, has entered into an agreement with CHDI Foundation to evaluate the effectiveness of its orally active, neurotrophic factor inducer PYM50028 (Cogane) in a preclinical model of Huntington's Disease.

Cogane boosts levels of two neurotrophic factors, brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) and glial cell derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF). Neurotrophic factors can promote the survival of neurons. Phytopharm is conducting a Phase I (safety and tolerability) trial in Parkinson's patients as well as in healthy volunteers. The company expects to have results available by the end of the year.

Since levels of BDNF are known to be reduced in the brains of HD patients and its reduction has been linked to pathology, CHDI Foundation is interested in Cogane's potential as a treatment for Huntington's Disease.

Cogane will be tested in the R6/2 mouse model and possibly others. If successful, CHDI and Phytopharm will move into clinical trials, first testing for symptom relief and then for neuroprotection. CHDI is also interested in testing for elevated levels of BDNF and GDNF to make sure the targeted action has been accomplished.

Dr. Robert Pacifici, Chief Scientific Officer at CHDI, is excited about the potential of Cogane. "Thanks to a lot of work that has been done throughout the HD community, both BDNF and GDNF along with their cognate receptors, are clearly well validated targets for therapeutic intervention in Huntington's Disease," said Dr. Pacifici. "We are excited at the possibility that the compounds from Phytopharm will allow us to conduct proof of concept experiments in rodent models and determine whether or not pharmacological intervention is indeed beneficial and if so, whether or not modulating levels of these neurotrophic factors will translate into a benefit for HD patients."

References:

Phytopharm press release

Interview with Drs. Robert Pacifici, Richard Morse, and Larry Park of CHDI Foundation.

-Marsha L. Miller, Ph.D., August 4, 2009