New Combo Therapy Shows Promise as Uterine Fibroids Treatment

The therapy was associated with a reduction in excessive menstrual blood loss, a hallmark of uterine fibroids.

March 17, 2021 By Caroline Tien

Women who experience heavy menstrual bleeding and severe pain as a result of uterine fibroids may soon have another treatment option available to them. In recent findings published in The New England Journal of Medicine, participants who adhered to an oral combination therapy involving the medication relugolix reported significant improvement in symptoms.

“This discovery is an important new tool that will be an important addition to the field,” said Ayman Al-Hendy, MD, PhD, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Chicago and the study’s lead author, in a press release.

Uterine fibroids—muscle tumors that develop on, within or around the uterus—are a relatively common complaint among women of reproductive age worldwide. While benign, uterine fibroids can reduce fertility, trigger painful, heavy periods and cause abdominal and pelvic discomfort, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

As previous research showed, relugolix could promote estrogen deficiency when taken alone. Al-Hendy and colleagues developed two combination therapies that incorporated relugolix, estrogen and synthetic progesterone and subsequently tested their safety and efficacy in two identical double-blind clinical trials. In both L1 and L2, participants received either a placebo or one of the two combination therapies for 24 weeks.

By the end of the study period, 73% of participants in the L1 combination therapy arm and 71% of women in the L2 combination therapy arm experienced a reduction in menstrual blood loss compared with 19% of participants in the L1 placebo arm and 15% of those in the L2 placebo arm. (Almost 50% of participants were Black women, who are statistically more likely to develop uterine fibroids than white women.)

These results suggest relugolix combination therapy has potential as a noninvasive alternative to surgery for the treatment of uterine fibroids, Al-Hendy said, particularly for young Black women.

“This combination therapy is especially a great option for this younger population who want to

preserve their fertility," Al-Hendy added. "But there are so many scenarios where I think this therapy will make a paradigm shift in treatment of uterine fibroids and improve the quality of life for women."

To read about one Black woman's personal experience with uterine fibroids and treatment, read "At 26, a Doctor Advised Her to Have a Hysterectomy." And for a list of organizations that provide women with information about the condition, check out "Uterine Fibroids Resources."

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