

Beta blockers may help COPD sufferers

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(Medical Xpress) -- Beta blockers, the group of drugs commonly prescribed to patients with heart diseases, may also have considerable benefits for sufferers of diseases such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema, according to new research led by the University of Dundee.

Researchers in the Asthma and Allergy Group at Dundee studied the effects of [beta blockers](#) on patients with [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease](#) (COPD), which includes those with chronic bronchitis, [emphysema](#) and other conditions.

They found that beta blockers reduced mortality rates, [hospital admissions](#) and [exacerbations](#) for patients who were already taking their regular inhaler therapies.

The research has been published in the [British Medical Journal](#).

'The clear benefits of beta blocker use in cardiovascular disease are well known but their use is generally avoided in patients who also have COPD, because of concerns they might cause adverse effects with breathing,' said Professor Brian Lipworth, who heads the Asthma & Allergy Group at Dundee.

'But our research shows there are no adverse effects and in fact, when used in addition to regular treatments like inhalers, the beta blockers have a very positive effect. They have a protective effect in that they reduce the amount of incidents that would cause COPD sufferers to be

admitted to hospital but they also seem to have a more beneficial effect beyond that.

'This is potentially very good news because beta blockers are drugs which are cheap and readily available. We are not yet at the stage where we could recommend they be prescribed to all COPD sufferers, but what our research does show is that if patients have cardiovascular problems and also have COPD, there is no reason not to give them beta blockers. In fact, instead there are very good reasons to prescribe them.

'Provided they are used carefully, that doses are introduced slowly, and that the cardio-selective types of beta blockers are used, then these are drugs that should be used to treat these patients.'

Many patients with cardiovascular disease also suffer from COPD - the illnesses in many cases are both directly related to smoking, so they are common partners.

The research looked at the records of almost 6000 patients diagnosed with COPD.

The research team also included researchers from NHS Tayside and the University of St Andrews.

Provided by University of Dundee

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