Dopamine Augmented Rehabilitation in Stroke (DARS): a multicentre double-blind, randomised controlled trial of co-careldopa compared with placebo, in addition to routine NHS occupational and physical therapy, delivered early after stroke on functional recovery

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Declared competing interests of authors: Gary A Ford received personal fees from Lundbeck Ltd, Boehringer Ingelheim, Pfizer and AstraZeneca, and grants and personal fees from Athersys outside the submitted work. Alastair Cozens had equity in Skene Software Ltd and other financial activity outside the submitted work for SiLCK Clinical Solutions Ltd. David Meads is a member of the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Elective and Emergency Specialist Care (EESC) Panel. Catherine M Sackley is a member of Health Services and Delivery Research researcher-led board. Amanda J Farrin is a member of the HTA Clinical Evaluation and Trials Board and the HTA Commissioning Strategy Group.

Published July 2019
DOI: 10.3310/eme06050
Plain English summary

Dopamine Augmented Rehabilitation in Stroke (DARS)
Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation 2019; Vol. 6: No. 5
DOI: 10.3310/eme06050

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**Plain English summary**

Stroke has a huge impact, and more than one-third of affected people will have moderate or severe disability that has an impact on quality of life and self-care. Rehabilitation, in the form of routine NHS physical or occupational therapy, promotes recovery of mobility through relearning to use the affected body parts and/or learning to compensate with the less affected side. However, many people are not able to walk despite physiotherapy. Small studies have found that certain drugs that affect the learning process may improve functional recovery and that this improvement occurs when the drugs are given at the same time as the therapy session. The Dopamine Augmented Rehabilitation in Stroke trial was designed to measure if combining these drugs with routine therapy leads to an improvement in the ability to walk independently 8 weeks after a stroke.

We allocated at random 593 patients with a stroke who were unable to independently walk ≥ 10 metres indoors to receive either a drug called co-careldopa or a placebo for 6 weeks, in addition to their routine therapy. We measured function and ability to walk at 8 weeks to see if the drug had an impact on recovery. We found that adding co-careldopa to routine physical and occupational therapy was not effective in improving walking following stroke. Further studies might consider using daily drug administration and more-intensive therapy. Future studies are needed to identify measures that identify new treatments to improve stroke recovery.
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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the EME programme as project number 08/43/61. The contractual start date was in January 2010. The final report began editorial review in November 2015 and was accepted for publication in February 2017.

The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The EME editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors’ report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

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