

NEWS LEADER

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Segal Institute begins drug study to assist meth addicts to stop using

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Segal Institute for Clinical Research has launched a Phase II study for patients with methamphetamine dependency. Segal Institute is one of 15 sites in the nation and the only site in South Florida participating in this study.

The drug, Vigabatrin, is an antiepileptic drug licensed for use in the treatment of epilepsy in Europe, but it is not approved in the U.S. Studies have been conducted in Mexico, which provided initial evidence supporting the potential safety and efficacy of Vigabatrin in the treatment of methamphetamine addiction. Vigabatrin is thought to work on

the brain to dampen the "high" caused by methamphetamine and it may reduce cravings for the drug.

For South Dade resident Jesse Harris, the study is a chance to kick a 20 year addiction to drugs. Harris began the study five weeks ago and is pleased with the progress he has made so far.

"All around, I am doing much better," said Harris, 50. "I don't crave the drugs as much as I used to. And I don't feel the need to have it anymore."

For each patient, the study lasts for 24 weeks. Upon entering the study, each patient's gives a urine sample to see if they are using. Then they are put on the drug, submit three urine tests per week and

have three psychological visits per week.

Harris says he takes six pills a day, three in the morning and three in the evening. And those six pills per day has helped him turn his life around.

"I feel stronger and more alert," Harris said. "I'm not in the daze that I used to be in everyday. I feel I can think better and process everything."

"I'm doing great and very happy I found this program."

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive stimulant that is a very serious problem in the United States and South Florida. It can be smoked, injected, inhaled, or taken by mouth. It has many street names, such as speed, meth, and

chalk. Methamphetamine hydrochloride, the crystal form, is inhaled by smoking and is referred to as ice, crystal, glass, and "Tina."

For Scott Segal, MD, this study is the first of its kind and Vigabatrin is the first drug that can help those addicted to drugs to lose their addiction.

"We are extremely optimistic and excited about the potential for Vigabatrin as a treatment for methamphetamine addiction," says Segal, President and Clinical Director of Segal Institute. "Currently, there are no proven or effective medications for meth addiction. The purpose of the current trial is to demonstrate the potential safety and efficacy of Vigabatrin as a treatment for

methamphetamine dependency in an adequate and well-controlled trial conducted in the U.S."

Methamphetamine destroys lives. Abusers usually become addicted quickly, needing higher doses more often.

Methamphetamine can also cause a variety of cardiovascular problems, including rapid heart rate, irregular heartbeat, and increased blood pressure. Hyperthermia (elevated body temperature) and convulsions may

occur with methamphetamine overdose, and if not treated immediately, can result in death.

Adverse health effects for addicts also include malnutrition, memory loss, psychotic behavior, and severe dental problems. Because its usage is highly prevalent within the gay community, abuse can contribute to increased transmission of infectious diseases, such as hepatitis and HIV/AIDS.

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Excessive use also leads to loss of jobs, crime, child neglect, and other social ills.

After completing a thorough screening process, patients admitted to the study will participate for approximately 24 weeks. Financial compensation is available. Psychological evaluation and counseling, free meals, and lab work are administered to each patient. You must be 18 years of age or older and must meet criteria for methamphetamine dependence as primary diagnosis.

Segal Institute makes sure to keep a great environment for its patients. They have earned the trust of their patients and have seen a high success rate so far during the study.

"We keep the environment well and treat the patients not as addicts," said Patrick Manos, the study coordinator. "To date we have screened 64 patients and have 15 on the study.

For those interested in participating in the study, there are three options. They can call 1-877-SEGAL-88, walking into the North Miami Office located at 1065 NE 125th Street Suite 417 or visit the website www.segaltrials.com.