

New hope for those living with Crohn's



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Christchurch woman Ashleigh Lilley needs new drugs to treat her Crohn's disease, otherwise she will have a colostomy bag.

Feeling nauseous, drained of energy and bloated may be about to change for those living with Crohn's.

New Zealand is one of six countries participating in a study aiming to combat the gastrointestinal disease that affects more than 20,000 Kiwis.

MAP US will randomise 270 participants, who will take a combination of three antibiotics in the form of a pill.

It is expected participants will go into remission at week 26 of the study, although this may vary. The study lasts for 62 weeks.

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The news has given hope to a Christchurch woman, who has both Glycogen Storage Disease (GSD) and Crohn's Disease.

Ashleigh Lilley cannot have medication on the market for Crohn's because it attacks her immune system, which is already made near non-existent from GSD.

"Crohn's stops you from doing so much even daily tasks like getting out of bed in the morning. You have no energy and just feel so tired, like having a shower. I'm run down as it is.

"It makes you bloated as well so I never feel good about myself and it's hard to find clothes which fit properly."

Without a successful drug, Lilley will need a colostomy bag.

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She was told she was unable to work two years ago. Prior to that, she was a receptionist.

"Because I had diarrhoea and vomiting with Crohn's, I found I would be on the phone and in a middle of a conversation I had to run off to the toilet."

Lilley then tried studying, but on her first day of an early childhood course she was admitted to hospital for seven weeks.

Crohn's and Colitis New Zealand chairman Brian Poole said living with Crohn's could be isolating.

"If you can imagine a bowel that's being emptied 20 or 30 times a day, it breaks your confidence."

Poole said the disease was rife in New Zealand, with more than 20,000 people living with it each day.

"People don't like talking about their bowels."

He thought the drug trial was positive, but it would not solve everyone's problems.

"It's like another tool in the tool box for gastroenterologists to use."

Professor Thomas Borody helped develop the medical idea behind the trial.

His approach to Crohn's is different because it treats the cause as infectious. The culprit being Mycobacterium avium subsp. paratuberculosis (MAP).

In animals, MAP causes Johne's disease, a chronic wasting intestinal diarrhoeal disease similar to Crohn's.

"When I developed this I wasn't even spoken to by the gastroenterologist society . . . physicians disbelieved, did not support and openly criticised the idea," he said.

Borody said the drug would be most effective for those had recently been diagnosed with Crohn's.

The trial is already open in New Zealand for applications. More information can be found [here](#).

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