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News Release

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VA Research Offers Insight on Parkinson's Disease *Collaborative Research on "Deep Brain Stimulation"*

WASHINGTON -- Veterans and others with Parkinson's disease who undergo deep brain stimulation (DBS) may benefit from research co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs and published recently in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*.

"VA is proud to partner with the National Institutes of Health on this research, the largest trial of its kind to date," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "This and other ground-breaking research on Parkinson's disease ensure we provide the best care possible for Veterans with this common, debilitating disease."

VA cares for about 40,000 Veterans with Parkinson's disease. DBS is often recommended for people who no longer respond well to medication alone.

The new report shows DBS is equally effective at either of two sites in the brain. Earlier results from the landmark study appeared last year in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, indicating that DBS overall is somewhat riskier than carefully managed drug therapy but may hold significant benefits for appropriate patients.

In DBS, surgeons implant electrodes in the brain and run thin wires under the skin to a pacemaker-like device. Electrical pulses from the battery-operated device jam the brain signals that cause motor symptoms such as stiffness and tremors. Thousands of Americans have seen successful results from DBS, but questions have remained about which of two stimulation site in the brain yields better outcomes.

The new analysis finds both sites roughly equal for patient outcomes relating to movement symptoms. There were subtle differences between the sites in terms of cognitive skills and mood, but the clinical significance of the differences is not clear.

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Researchers will follow the study participants several more years to examine the relative benefits and risks of each DBS approach.

The study was sponsored by VA's Cooperative Studies Program and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, part of the National Institutes of Health.

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