



‘Like night and day’

Return to pork insulin invigorates diabetic Winnipeg Sun

March 12, 2001

Diabetic Don Cunningham is convinced the insulin he has been taking for the past eight years has been slowly killing him. The 57-year old's suspicions were raised last month after a story in the Winnipeg Sun revealed some Type 1 diabetics – formerly taking insulin made from animal sources – were reporting adverse reactions to a new insulin made from human cells.

Cunningham, a resident of Traverse Bay, Man., was experiencing the same reactions, including fatigue, loss of feeling in his fingers and paralysis in his right arm. His eyesight also steadily declined from

1992, [error, should read 1996] when he switched to the human insulin until he eventually went blind four years ago.

Cunningham suffered a mini-stroke in 1994 and was hospitalized for a second stroke two years later. “My life deteriorated since 1992,” he told The Sun yesterday in a phone interview from his home. “There’s times I wanted to commit suicide”. But after his wife Jean read him the article last month, Cunningham considered switching back to the pork insulin. Despite his doctor’s disapproval, Cunningham finally made the switch Thursday.

Yesterday, Cunningham said he’s a new man: “Within four days, I’m like a million bucks,” he boasted. “I can’t believe the results. It’s like night and day.”

Cunningham said the feeling has dramatically returned to his right

arms and his fingers. He's also experiencing increased energy, improved blood pressure, more frequent bowel movements and no more back pain. "I'm pretty happy with myself right now," he added. "If it wasn't for the story in The Sun, I wouldn't be what I am today.

And now Cunningham wants to warn other diabetics. "Don't always take your doctors advice. Get a second opinion," he advised. "I should never have changed. I had to suffer all these months and all the years." Cunningham was diagnosed with diabetes in 1980.

Winnipeg resident Bernadette Brunka, who used the animal insulin mix for 45 years without any problems, said after she began using Humulin, a genetically engineered insulin identical to insulin produce by the human pancreas, she, too, experienced a variety of medical problems.

But Colin Reeve, a pharmacist and certified diabetes educator, said these cases may be rare. Reeve said his experience suggests diabetics would do better on genetically engineered human-based insulin. "(But) different people have different bodies," he added. "Therefore, they will take differently to different medications."

said that there had been a concerted effort by MNCs to push synthetic insulin in the Indian market to replace animal extracted insulin.

The expected gains from synthetic insulin – purity, cost effectiveness and immunity to allergy, have proved to be 'exaggerated' and animal insulin had the advantage of longer duration of action so that sudden onset of hypoglycaemia [sharp fall in blood sugar levels] was avoided. Accidents and deaths from hypoglycaemia had seen a sharp rise in Europe and North America after the monopolisation of the market by synthetic insulin.

In India, while 400 vials of synthetic insulin cost about Rs. 240, animal insulin cost as low as Rs. 65. Dr Kocchupillai said that the Indian Council of Medical research recently recommended to the Government of India that animal insulin should be encouraged and promoted so that cheap alternatives were readily available in the market.

Natural insulin should be encouraged

The Hindu

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Natural insulin, which is produced from animals, is a safer and cheaper alternative to the synthetic insulin, which is being promoted by certain pharmaceutical companies. Speaking to newsmen here on Friday, Dr Arthur Teuscher, Professor of medicine, Bern University, Switerland, Dr Philip Corfman, former executive secretary, US Food and Drug Authority and Dr N. Kocchupillai, Professor and Head, Dept of Endocrinology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi,

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