



Probiotics may make life easier for people with gastrointestinal disorders

The efficacy of two probiotic strains is studied in one-year clinical trials with volunteers suffering from gastrointestinal disorders in Ireland, Spain and Finland. The overall objective of this EU-funded project, PROGID, is to assess the effects of these probiotics in easing the symptoms of inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD).

The probiotic strains selected to these studies are *Lactobacillus salivarius* UCC118 and *Bifidobacterium infantis* UCC35624. The selection of the strains is based on previous studies. The participating patients receive one or the other of the probiotics in a milk-based product or they receive a placebo product. After the start patients are followed first after one month and subsequently every third month by a wide range of both measure on bodily function and subjective measures on the quality of life. The effect of the treatment is observed with a questionnaire measuring the patients' well-being, faecal samples, blood and saliva samples.

The volunteers in the study suffer either from Crohn's disease or the ulcerative colitis, called also inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD), which are important and disabling diseases with recurrent intestinal symptoms. These disorders involve life-long suffering for up to 50/100,000 people in the US and Europe and currently there is no cure. Many researchers think that the intestinal inflammation in IBD results from an abnormal reaction of the immune system to certain bacteria in our intestinal tract. Therefore, it might be possible to alter the microbial ecosystem in the gut using probiotics to prevent this abnormal immune response from occurring.

Further studies will explore the role of the human intestinal bacteria in these diseases, potentially opening new therapeutic approaches for preventing these diseases.

At the present stage, ethical approvals have been obtained for the study in each country, and recruitment of patients and the administration of strains have been started in all research centres.

Further information can be obtained from the coordinator:
Prof. Fergus Shanahan
National University of Ireland Cork,
Clinical Sciences Building, Cork University Hospital, Cork, Ireland
tel: +353 21 490 1226, fax: +353 21 434 5300, e-mail: f.shanahan@ucc.ie



More information on the PROEUHEALTH cluster can be obtained from
<http://proeuhealth.vtt.fi> or by e-mail proeuhealth@vtt.fi

