Vinpocetine, a compound derived from the periwinkle plant *Vinca minor*, increases blood flow and oxygenation to the brain in patients who have suffered a stroke, according to several new studies.¹³

Stroke affects an estimated 700,000 Americans each year, choking off the flow of blood and oxygen to the brain. Stroke's effects can include memory loss, paralysis, and vision and speech problems. Treatment immediately following a stroke is associated with improved outcomes.

In a double-blind, placebo-controlled study, researchers examined vinpocetine's effects on patients who had suffered an ischemic stroke. They randomly assigned 43 patients to two groups. The first group received 20 mg of vinpocetine in 500 ml of saline intravenously, and the placebo group received saline only. Examining cerebral blood flow before and after treatment, the researchers found that vinpocetine helped increase cerebral circulation and tissue oxygenation.¹

A subsequent study used positron emission tomography (PET) to determine the effects of intravenously administered vinpocetine in chronic ischemic stroke patients. In this double-blind study, 14 days of intravenous vinpocetine was found to increase cerebral blood flow.²

Vinpocetine may have several different mechanisms of action, including antioxidant, vasodilatory, and neuroprotective activities.³ Vinpocetine may help optimize cerebral blood flow and oxygen supply in patients who have suffered from ischemic stroke. Both intravenous and oral administration of vinpocetine show promise in promoting optimized cerebral circulation.³⁴ While orally administered vinpocetine rapidly appears in the brains of healthy human subjects,⁴ more studies are indicated to examine its effects in people who have suffered a stroke.

—Christie C. Yerby, ND

References