

## New device could stop rheumatoid arthritis pain without pills

---

*January 16, 2015*

CTVNews.ca

Published Saturday, December 27, 2014 11:50PM EST

Last Updated Saturday, December 27, 2014 11:53PM EST

Researchers are testing out a possible new treatment for rheumatoid arthritis that doesn't require taking any pills.

The device is surgically inserted into a patient's neck, where it rests against a nerve. Patients turn the device on for three minutes each day using a magnet. It then sends electrical impulses that reduce the number of immune cells that travel to joints, causing painful inflammation.

Monique Robroek, who could hardly move a year ago even with the strongest medicine available, was able to stop taking drugs a few weeks after starting treatment with the device. She says she is now pain-free.

Paul-Peter Tak, Chairman of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology at the Academic Medical Centre, part of the University of Amsterdam, says there seems to be an "immediate effect." Robroek was one of 20 severely-affected sufferers who volunteered for a study of the device in Amsterdam. More than half saw a reduction in pain.

"It's very appealing to patients because they don't like to take medicines for 30 to 40 years of their lives," he says.

Tak is the senior vice-president and head of Immuno-Inflammation research and development for GlaxoSmithKline, a British company that has invested billions in bioelectronics research like the implant.

Bioelectronics are implantable devices that offer hope not just to arthritis patients, but also those with inflammatory bowel disease, hypertension and diabetes, according to GlaxoSmithKline.

Still, experts urge caution due to the small number of patients in the Amsterdam study. They say the treatment, even if it works, would not likely be available for a decade.

An estimated 300,000 Canadians suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, according to The Arthritis Society.