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Putting the Brakes on Diabetes

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Ivanhoe Newswire) -- As many as 3 million Americans are living with type 1 diabetes. Doctors say having a sibling or parent with the condition ups your risk of developing it by 10-fold, and managing it can mean four or more injections a day or wearing an insulin pump. But what if you could stop diabetes in the early stages before you need all of those needles? That's the goal behind a new experimental treatment. One teen is gambling on a drug in hopes of putting the brakes on his diabetes.



A jam session in the garage is just what the doctor ordered for Daniel Albright.

"It's just a way to get energy out, for sure," Daniel told Ivanhoe.

The 17-year-old has type 1 diabetes. He's one of three kids in the Albright family with it. Since his siblings were diagnosed first, Daniel was monitored, and doctors spotted signs of his diabetes early. Right now, he's in a honeymoon period. His body's still producing some insulin.

Daniel enrolled in a clinical trail to put the brakes on his diabetes. He gets monthly infusions of a rheumatoid arthritis drug called abatacept. The goal -- stop his immune system from killing the insulin-producing cells he has left.



"Instead of saying, oh well, you have diabetes, here's the medication and here's the teaching, let's see what we can do to prevent it from getting worse -- to stop it in it's tracks," Daniel's mother, Donna Albright, told Ivanhoe.

"When you're first diagnosed with diabetes, you probably have anywhere from 10 to 30 percent of your insulin producing cells still available, and we'd like to freeze it there," William Russell, M.D., Director of Pediatric Endocrinology & Diabetes at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tenn., told Ivanhoe.

In animals, the drug prevented full-blown diabetes from developing. In people, that would mean lower doses of insulin, easier blood sugar control and a lower risk of hypoglycemia, or dangerously low blood sugar.

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"It's much easier to take care of diabetes when the patient themselves is making adequate amounts of insulin," Dr. Russell said.

After a couple of months of infusions, Daniel uses less insulin than his siblings -- and doesn't need a pump.

Abatacept is FDA-approved to treat rheumatoid arthritis but hasn't been approved for diabetes. There's a risk the drug will weaken the immune system, making patients more susceptible to infection. To be eligible for the trial, patients must be within the first 100 days of their diabetes diagnosis. For more information about the abatacept trial, call 1-800-425-8361 or visit www.diabetestrialnet.org.



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If this story or any other Ivanhoe story has impacted your life or prompted you or someone you know to seek or change treatments, please let us know by contacting Melissa Medalie at mmedalie@ivanhoe.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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