

Novo's latest obesity drug succeeds in trial

AANU ADEOYE — LONDON

Novo Nordisk's new obesity drug led to statistically significant weight loss and blood-sugar improvements in people with diabetes, a trial has found, in a positive sign for the Danish company's treatment pipeline.

Patients with type 2 diabetes using amyretin lost up to 14.5 per cent of their body weight, compared with 2.6 per cent for those on a placebo.

The drug also reduced blood-sugar levels, with about 90 per cent of participants in the phase 2 trial reporting blood glucose levels below 7 per cent. The normal range is below 6 per cent.

The new drug combines semaglutide, the active ingredient in Novo's diabetes and obesity blockbusters Ozempic and Wegovy, with amylin, a hormone that promotes a feeling of fullness.

The patients in the trial used the drug

for up to 36 weeks and received either a once-weekly injection or a daily pill, with doses ranging from 0.4mg to 50mg.

Novo's shares rose more than 3 per cent after announcing the trial results.

The company is planning a phase 3 trial of amyretin for adults with type 2 diabetes next year.

Patients without diabetes in a different early-stage trial of amyretin lost an average of 24.3 per cent of their body weight on the highest dose, the company reported earlier this year.

Martin Lange, Novo's chief scientific officer, said that the company was encouraged by the new results and that it was a demonstration of the "potential best-in-class profile of amyretin".

Wegovy, which is available only as an injection, causes an average weight loss of 15 per cent. Novo submitted an approval application to the US Food and Drug Administration this year for a tab-

let version of Wegovy. A decision is expected by the end of this year.

Data from trials of the Wegovy pill showed average weight loss of 16.6 per cent over 64 weeks.

The group has been on the hunt to fill its pipeline, with Wegovy coming off its patent in certain markets starting next year.

Novo's new chief executive, Mike Doustdar, who replaced Lars Fruergaard Jørgensen in August, oversaw a bidding war for obesity biotech Metsera, which Novo ultimately lost to Pfizer.

Shares in Novo, which was once Europe's most valued company by market capitalisation, have fallen 60 per cent in the past year.

The amyretin results come a day after Novo reported that its older diabetes drug, Rybelsus, had failed to slow the progression of Alzheimer's in two closely watched late-stage trials.