antiretroviral regimen. Evaluation must continue, including monitoring for adverse effects and the emergence of viral resistance.

Review prepared and translated by the Prescrire Editorial Staff (no conflicts of interest)

Literature search

Our literature search was based on continuous prospective scrutiny of contents listings of the main international journals, Current Contents-Clinical Medicine, and member bulletins of the International Society of Drug Bulletins (ISDB) at the Prescrire library; routine consultation of Martindale The Complete Drug Reference; and routine consultation of the websites of the European Medicines Agency (EMEA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) up to 25 January 2008.

We also examined the following databases: Embase/Excerpta Medica Drugs and Therapeutics Database (EMBASE/EX/MED) (1994-4th quarter 2007), Medline (1946-January week 1, 2008), Reactions (1983-October 2007), The Cochrane Library (CDSR, DARE, Central, HTA, Nhsed; 2007 issue 4), and the following websites: Cadth, CVZ, DERP, Inami, Iqwig, NICE, Scottish Consortium and SIGN, up to 15 January 2008.

In response to our request for information, Merck Sharpe and Dohme-Chibret sent us some basic administrative documents, published documents, and packaging items.

9- “Lipid levels were not increased in patients taking MK-0518 an investigational HIV integrase inhibitor, in combination therapy after 24 weeks of therapy”. www.merck.com accessed 26 April 2007: 2 pages.

Severe Crohn’s disease: a second TNF alpha antagonist, subcutaneous administration

● No direct comparison with intravenous infliximab.

Adalimumab (Humira®, Abbott) is the second TNF alpha antagonist immunosuppressant, after infliximab, to be marketed for the treatment of patients with severe Crohn’s disease (1,2).

Clinical evaluation is mainly based on a randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial in 499 patients who responded to 2 injections of adalimumab (2,3). After one year of treatment, 36% of patients who received adalimumab were still in remission, versus 12% of patients on placebo (p<0.001. Data concerning complications of Crohn’s disease (e.g. fistulae) are not very convincing (2).

Adalimumab has the adverse effects common to all TNF alpha antagonists, notably serious infections, lymphoma and worsening heart failure. Adalimumab has a different mode of administration: it is injected subcutaneously while infliximab is administered by intravenous infusion, in hospital (1,2).

In conclusion, the only (minor) advantage of adalimumab is its convenience of use, but only in patients with non-fistulated forms of Crohn’s disease.

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POSSIBLY HELPFUL

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New Indication

see also page 145

Adalimumab (Humira®)

Solution for SC injection

• 40 mg of adalimumab per prefilled syringe

New indication: ‘(…) severe, active Crohn’s disease, in patients who have not responded despite a full and adequate course of therapy with a corticosteroid and/or an immunosuppressant; or who are intolerant to or have medical contraindications for such therapies’.

[EU marketing authorisation, centralised procedure]

Immunosuppressant; TNF alpha antagonist


Assessment elsewhere

Raltegravir is marketed in several countries. Evidence has been assessed by drug bulletins independent of the pharmaceutical industry. Below are selected excerpts from their conclusions (our translations when necessary).

The Medical Letter (United States): “Raltegravir (Isentress), the first integrase strand transfer inhibitor, taken with other active antiretroviral drugs is effective in patients infected with treatment-refractory HIV-1 infection” (1). Australian Prescriber (Australia): “(…) raltegravir has a significant effect on the markers of HIV infection. Whether this improves the patient’s prognosis remains to be seen. Longer-term follow-up is also needed to assess the development of viral resistance or long-term adverse events such as cancer” (2).