

PHARMACY CORNER

Drug Approved for Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia



Asparaginase *Erwinia chrysanthemi* (Erwinaze®) was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in November 2011. The drug is indicated for patients with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) who are treated with asparaginase and who develop hypersensitivity to *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*)–derived asparaginase. About 20% of patients with ALL develop hypersensitivity to *E. coli*–derived asparaginase each year. Patients can complete the full course of treatment with the use of asparaginase *Erwinia chrysanthemi*.

Approval was based on the results of unpublished clinical studies of 630 patients with ALL. In the pivotal efficacy study (N = 58), all evaluable patients achieved the asparaginase activity primary endpoint. For more information, visit www.erwinaze.com.

Drug Showing Impact in Head, Neck, and Pancreatic Trials

An unpublished phase 2 clinical trial showed positive results using IV administration of reovirus serotype 3 (Reolysin®) in combination with paclitaxel and carboplatin in patients with advanced head and neck cancers. The U.S. trial (N = 14) was a single-arm, open-label study of Reolysin given via IV with paclitaxel (175 mg/m²) and carboplatin (area under the curve 5) every three weeks in patients with platinum-refractory recurrent and/or metastatic squamous cell cancers of the oral cavity, larynx, or pharynx.

All enrolled patients had received prior chemotherapy, radiotherapy, or a combination of the two for metastatic or recurrent disease. Seventy-one percent (n = 10) of participants received prior chemotherapy treatment with taxanes. Of the 13 patients evaluable for response, four had partial responses, for an objective response rate of 31%. Six patients had stable disease or better for 12 weeks or longer for a disease control rate (stable disease or better) of 46%.

Interim results from another unpublished phase 2 clinical trial using IV administration of Reolysin in combination with gemcitabine in patients with advanced pancreatic cancer indicated 12 patients were evaluable for response. All but one patient reported symptomatic improvement. The treatment was well tolerated, with manageable adverse events. The study is ongoing and results are highly encouraging, given the typical dismal prognosis for pancreatic cancer.

NOTEWORTHY

National Cancer Institute Launches Smartphone Database

NCITrials@NIH is a free mobile application available for download on iTunes that allows oncologists, patients, and families to search more than 150 clinical trials and share clinical trial information. The database is being updated continually so that the most current information is available to those seeking treatment options. For more information and to download NCITrials@NIH, visit <http://bethesdaclinicaltrials.cancer.gov/app>.

New Infection Prevention Resources Available for Patients

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has introduced new resources as part of the Preventing Infections in Cancer Patients program first introduced in 2009. The resources include an interactive Web site and a basic infection control and prevention plan for outpatient oncology settings. The resources are intended to provide information, action steps, and tools for patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers.

The interactive Web site allows patients with cancer and caregivers to complete a short online questionnaire about their risk factors and download information about how to help lower their risk for infection while receiving chemotherapy. The resource is available at www.preventcancerinfections.org.

For staff working in outpatient settings, CDC experts customized key policies and procedures in existing guidelines to meet the needs of outpatient oncology

facilities. The plan and an associated checklist are accessible online at www.cdc.gov/cancer/preventinfections.

Free Toolkit Developed for Myelodysplastic Syndromes

A new free resource to communicate with and support patients with myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) has been developed for healthcare providers by the Aplastic Anemia and MDS International Foundation. The toolkit was developed in response to a patient survey conducted in 2009 that found that many patients with MDS lack knowledge of disease basics and are unaware of the severity of the disease.

Patient information sheets and a counseling guide, which includes directions for use, as well as information about the MDS Patient Survey, are included in the toolkit. To order a toolkit, visit <http://AAMD.org/treating-mds-toolkit>. Materials also can be downloaded online.

PRODUCT UPDATES

Updated Software Offers Faster, Safer Radiation

Clinac® and Trilogy® linear accelerators have been updated to deliver higher doses up to two times faster than previously possible. Treating patients with breast cancer in prone positions (i.e., on their stomachs) is also now an option.

The updated control software, which received 510(k) clearance in November from the FDA, adds a high-intensity mode to the Clinac and Trilogy machines. The Pivotal™ Care Solution for Prone Breast Treatment also received FDA clearance. For many women without axillary lymph node disease, treatment in the prone position can be used to significantly reduce the volume of lung and heart tissue exposed. For more information, visit www.varian.com.

New Cream Protects Skin From Tape and Bandages

TapeRelief™, a fast-drying cream applied to the skin, is designed to prevent