

# Adalimumab Improved Symptoms of Psoriatic Arthritis

Preliminary data from two studies showing encouraging results in treating psoriatic arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis with adalimumab (brand name HUMIRA) 40 mg every other week were presented at the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) annual congress in Berlin early this year.

Patients with psoriatic arthritis responded to adalimumab treatment as early as two weeks after the initial dose showing significant improvement in both the signs and symptoms of the joint disease and skin manifestations with continued improvements at 12 weeks. Analysis of a separate 12-week study shows that adalimumab significantly improves spinal symptoms in patients with active ankylosing spondylitis after only one dose.

"The findings of these two studies are significant because they validate our research to assess adalimumab's potential to treat other autoimmune diseases in addition to rheumatoid arthritis," said James B. Lefkowitz, M.D., divisional vice president, development, Abbott Immunology.

Adalimumab provided joint and skin improvement in psoriatic arthritis. Fifteen patients with active psoriatic arthritis were treated with adalimumab 40 mg every other week, in this open-label trial, and observed over a 12-week period to evaluate the potential therapeutic effects of the treatment. After two weeks, significant improvements were seen in the signs and symptoms of the joint disease and skin manifestations associated with disease. Further improvements in the skin and joint disease were evident at 12 weeks. Forty-two percent of patients treated with adalimumab experienced an ACR 20 response after only one dose. ACR (American College of Rheumatology) 20, 50 and 70 criteria represent percent improvement in tender and swollen joint counts and other relevant clinical measures. Also after two weeks, 77 percent of patients experienced at least 25 percent improvement in health-related quality of life as measured by the Health Assessment Questionnaire (HAQ) disability index, which is designed to capture patients' assessment of activities of daily living such as grooming, dressing and walking. Health-related quality

of life questionnaires are used to measure the impact of chronic illness on a patient's life.

Further improvement was seen at 12 weeks in both the arthritic symptoms and in health-related quality of life. Sixty-six percent of patients achieved an ACR 20 response and approximately 30 percent attained ACR 50. The HAQ disability index also showed further improvement at week 12 compared to week two. Substantial improvements also were evident in the skin disease of these patients. Target lesion scores, an evaluation of the severity of a single psoriasis lesion, improved by nearly 30 percent after one dose. After 12 weeks, the target lesion score improved by more than 70 percent.

"The initial results and analysis of this study show that HUMIRA provided significant benefit to many patients with psoriatic arthritis shortly after the first dose," said Christopher T. Ritchlin, M.D., associate professor and lead investigator, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York. "While more research is necessary, these early findings are promising and support HUMIRA's potential as a treatment for psoriatic arthritis."

## COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE ON NHS

Patients could be offered complementary medicine such as acupuncture and homeopathy on the NHS under plans being considered by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The proposals have been put forward by Welsh Secretary Peter Hain, who says he has the support of both the Prime Minister and the Prince of Wales.

Mr Hain said he wants to see Wales act as a model for the UK for further development on complementary medicine.

Health Minister Jane Hutt is now considering a pilot scheme.

Around one in five adults in the UK are estimated to have used some form of complementary medicine. Under Mr Hain's proposals, Welsh GPs may be able to refer their NHS patients to dieticians and reflexologists. Mr Hain, who uses complementary medicine himself, claims his son's asthma went after he was given advice about his diet. Cardiff GP Dr Andrew Dearden, who is the Chair of the BMA's Welsh GPs' committee, said it sounded like a

good idea. "I suspect we would need a list of conditions that could be treated, and a list of people who have contracts with the NHS, so the NHS can ensure they are properly trained," he said. "I would have some difficulty prescribing a tablet or medicine I had no training with. "I think the referral to a practising practitioner would be the way forward."

Talks are under way between the assembly government, the Department of Health and the Prince of Wales Foundation. A guide for Welsh patients on complementary treatments is also under development.