REMICADE-maintenance experienced elevations in ALT at >1 to <3 times the ULN compared to 34% of patients treated with placebo-maintenance. ALT elevations ≥3 times the ULN were observed in 5% of patients who received REMICADE-maintenance compared with 4% of patients who received placebo-maintenance. ALT elevations ≥5 times ULN were observed in 2% of patients who received REMICADE-maintenance compared to none in patients treated with placebo-maintenance. In UC clinical trials (median follow up 30 weeks. Specifically, the median duration of follow-up was 30 weeks for placebo and 31 weeks for REMICADE.), 17% of patients receiving REMICADE experienced elevations in ALT at >1 to <3 times the ULN compared to 12% of patients treated with placebo. ALT elevations ≥3 times the ULN were observed in 2% of patients who received REMICADE compared with 1% of patients who received placebo. ALT elevations ≥5 times ULN were observed in <1% of patients in both REMICADE and placebo groups. In an AS clinical trial (median follow up 24 weeks for placebo group and 102 weeks for REMICADE group) 51% of patients receiving REMICADE experienced elevations in ALT at >1 to <3 times the ULN compared to 15% of patients treated with placebo. ALT elevations ≥3 times the ULN were observed in 10% of patients who received REMICADE compared to none in patients who received placebo. ALT elevations ≥5 times ULN were observed in 4% of patients who received REMICADE compared to none in patients treated with placebo. In a PsA clinical trial (median follow up 39 weeks for REMICADE group and 18 weeks in placebo group) 50% of patients receiving REMICADE experienced elevations in ALT at >1 to <3 times the ULN compared to 16% of patients treated with placebo. ALT elevations ≥3 times the ULN were observed in 7% of patients who received REMICADE compared to none in patients who received placebo. ALT elevations ≥5 times ULN were observed in 2% of patients who received REMICADE compared to none in patients treated with placebo. In PsO clinical trials, (ALT values are obtained in 2 phase 3 psoriasis studies with median follow-up of 50 weeks for REMICADE and 16 weeks for placebo). 49% of patients receiving REMICADE experienced elevations in ALT at >1 to <3 times the ULN compared to 24% of patients treated with placebo. ALT ≥3 x ULN were observed in 8% of patients who received REMICADE compared to <1 % who received placebo. ALT elevations ≥5 x ULN were observed in 3% of patients who received REMICADE compared to none in patients treated with placebo. **Adverse Reactions in Pediatric Crohn's Disease** There were some differences observed in the adverse reactions observed in the pediatric patients receiving REMICADE compared to those observed in adults with CD. The following adverse events were reported more commonly in 103 randomized pediatric CD patients administered 5 mg/kg REMICADE through 54 weeks than in 385 adult CD patients receiving a similar treatment regimen: anemia (11%), blood in stool (10%), leukopenia (9%), flushing (9%), viral infection (8%), neutropenia (7%), bone fracture (7%), bacterial infection (6%), and respiratory tract allergic reaction (6%). Infections were reported in 56% of randomized pediatric patients in Study Peds Crohn's and in 50% of adult patients in Study Crohn's I. In Study Peds Crohn's, infections were reported more frequently for patients who received every 8 week as opposed to every 12 week infusions (74% and 38%, respectively), while serious infections were reported for 3 patients in the every 8 week and 4 patients in the every 12 week maintenance treatment group. The most commonly reported infections were upper respiratory tract infection and pharyngitis, and the most commonly reported serious infection was abscess. Pneumonia was reported for 3 patients, (2 in the every 8 week and 1 in the every 12 week maintenance treatment groups). Herpes zoster was reported for 2 patients in the every 8 week maintenance treatment group. In Study Peds Crohn's, 18% of randomized patients experienced one or more infusion reactions, with no notable difference between treatment groups. Of the 112 patients in Study Peds Crohn's, there were no serious infusion reactions, and 2 patients had non-serious anaphylactoid reactions. Antibodies to REMICADE developed in 3% of pediatric patients in Study Peds Crohn's. Elevations of ALT up to 3 times the upper limit of normal (ULN) were seen in 18% of pediatric patients in CD clinical trials; 4% had ALT elevations ≥3 x ULN, and 1% had elevations ≥5 x ULN. (Median follow-up was 53 weeks.) The most common serious adverse events reported in the post-marketing experience in children were infections (some fatal) including opportunistic infections and tuberculosis, infusion reactions, and hypersensitivity reactions. Serious adverse events in the post-marketing experience with REMICADE in the pediatric population have also included malignancies, including hepatosplenic T-cell lymphomas (see *Boxed WARNINGS* and *WARNINGS*), transient hepatic enzyme abnormalities, lupus-like syndromes, and the development of autoantibodies. **Adverse Reactions in Psoriasis Studies** During the placebo-controlled portion across the three clinical trials up to Week 16, the proportion of patients who experienced at least 1 SAE (defined as resulting in death, life threatening, requires hospitalization, or persistent or significant disability/incapacity) was 1.7% in the 3 mg/kg REMICADE group, 3.2% in the placebo group, and 3.9% in the 5 mg/kg REMICADE group. Among patients in the 2 Phase 3 studies, 12.4% of patients receiving REMICADE 5 mg/kg every 8 weeks through one year of maintenance treatment experienced at least 1 SAE in Study I. In Study II, 4.1% and 4.7% of patients receiving REMICADE 3 mg/kg and 5 mg/kg every 8 weeks, respectively, through one year of maintenance treatment experienced at least 1 SAE. One death due to bacterial sepsis occurred 25 days after the second infusion of 5 mg/kg REMICADE. Serious infections included sepsis, and abscesses. In Study I, 2.7% of patients receiving REMICADE 5 mg/kg every 8 weeks through 1 year of maintenance treatment experienced at least 1 serious infection. In Study II, 1.0% and 1.3% of patients receiving REMICADE 3 mg/kg and 5 mg/kg, respectively, through 1 year of treatment experienced at least 1 serious infection. The most common serious infections (requiring hospitalization) were abscesses (skin, throat, and peri-rectal) reported by 5 (0.7%) patients in the 5 mg/kg REMICADE group. Two active cases of tuberculosis were reported: 6 weeks and 34 weeks after starting REMICADE. In placebo-controlled portion of the psoriasis studies, 7 of 1123 patients who received REMICADE at any dose were diagnosed with at least one NMSC compared to 0 of 334 patients who received placebo. In the psoriasis studies, 1% (15/1373) of patients experienced serum sickness or a combination of arthralgia and/or myalgia with fever, and/or rash, usually early in the treatment course. Of these patients, 6 required hospitalization due to fever, severe myalgia, arthralgia, swollen joints, and immobility. **Other Adverse Reactions** Safety data are available from 4779 REMICADE-treated adult patients, including 1304 with RA, 1106 with CD, 484 with UC, 202 with AS, 293 with PsA, 1373 with plaque PsO and 17 with other conditions. (For information on other adverse reactions in pediatric patients, see *ADVERSE REACTIONS, Adverse Reactions in Pediatric Crohn's Disease.*) Adverse events reported in ≥5% of all patients with RA receiving 4 or more infusions are listed below. The types and frequencies of adverse reactions observed were similar in REMICADE-treated RA, AS, PsA, plaque PsO and CD patients except for abdominal pain, which occurred in 26% of REMICADE-treated patients with CD. In the CD studies, there were insufficient numbers and duration of follow-up for patients who never received REMICADE to provide meaningful comparisons. The percentages of adverse events for placebo-treated patients (n=350; average weeks of follow-up 59) and REMICADE-treated patients (n=1129; average weeks of follow-up 66), respectively, are: *Gastrointestinal:* Nausea: 20, 21; Abdominal pain: 8, 12; Diarrhea: 12, 12; Dyspepsia: 7, 10; *Respiratory:* Upper respiratory tract infection: 25, 32; Sinusitis: 8, 14; Pharyngitis: 8, 12; Coughing: 8, 12; Bronchitis: 9, 10; Rhinitis: 5, 8; *Skin and appendages disorders:* Rash: 5, 10; Pruritis: 2, 7; *Body as a whole—general disorders:* Fatigue: 7, 9; Pain: 7, 8; *Resistance mechanism disorders:* Fever: 4, 7; Moniliasis: 3, 5; *Central and peripheral nervous system disorders:* Headache: 14, 18; *Musculoskeletal system disorders:* Back pain: 5, 8; Arthralgia: 7, 8; *Urinary system disorders:* Urinary tract infection: 6, 8; *Cardiovascular disorders, general:* Hypertension: 5, 7. Because clinical trials are conducted under widely varying conditions, adverse reaction rates observed in clinical trials of a drug cannot be directly compared to rates in clinical trials of another drug and may not predict the rates observed in broader patient populations in clinical practice. The most common serious adverse events observed in clinical trials were infections (see *ADVERSE REACTIONS, Infections*). Other serious, medically relevant adverse events ≥0.2% or clinically significant adverse events by body system were as follows: *Body as a whole:* allergic reaction, diaphragmatic hernia, edema, surgical/procedural sequela; *Blood:* pancytopenia; *Cardiovascular:* circulatory failure, hypotension, syncope; *Gastrointestinal:* constipation, gastrointestinal hemorrhage, ileus, intestinal obstruction, intestinal perforation, intestinal stenosis, pancreatitis, peritonitis, proctalgia; *Central & Peripheral Nervous:* meningitis, neuritis, peripheral neuropathy, dizziness; *Heart Rate and Rhythm:* arrhythmia, bradycardia, cardiac arrest, tachycardia; *Liver and Biliary:* biliary pain, cholecystitis, cholelithiasis, hepatitis; *Metabolic and Nutritional:* dehydration; *Musculoskeletal:* intervertebral disk herniation, tendon disorder; *Myo-, Endo-, Pericardial, and Coronary Valve:* myocardial infarction; *Platelet, Bleeding, and Clotting:* thrombocytopenia; *Neoplasms:* basal cell, breast, lymphoma; *Psychiatric:* confusion, suicide attempt; *Red Blood Cell:* anemia, hemolytic anemia; *Reproductive:* menstrual irregularity; *Resistance Mechanism:* cellulitis, sepsis, serum sickness; *Respiratory:* adult respiratory distress syndrome, lower respiratory tract infection (including pneumonia), pleural effusion, pleurisy, pulmonary edema, respiratory insufficiency; *Skin and Appendages:* increased sweating, ulceration; *Urinary:* renal calculus, renal failure; *Vascular (Extracardiac):* brain infarction, pulmonary embolism, thrombophlebitis; *White Cell and Reticuloendothelial:* leukopenia, lymphadenopathy. **Post-marketing Adverse Events** The following adverse events, some with fatal outcome, have been reported during post-approval use of REMICADE: neutropenia (see *WARNINGS, Hematologic Events*), interstitial lung disease (including pulmonary fibrosis/ interstitial pneumonitis and very rare rapidly progressive disease), idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura, thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura, pericardial effusion, systemic and cutaneous vasculitis, erythema multiforme, Stevens-Johnson Syndrome, toxic epidermal necrolysis, Guillain-Barré syndrome, psoriasis (including new onset and pustular, primarily palmar/plantar), transverse myelitis, and neuropathies (additional neurologic events have also been observed, see *WARNINGS, Neurologic Events*) and acute liver failure, jaundice, hepatitis, and cholestasis (see *WARNINGS, Hepatotoxicity*). Because these events are reported voluntarily from a population of uncertain size, it is not always possible to reliably estimate their frequency or establish a causal relationship to REMICADE exposure. The following serious adverse events have been reported in the post-marketing experience in children: infections (some fatal) including opportunistic infections and tuberculosis, infusion reactions, and hypersensitivity reactions. Serious adverse events in the post-marketing experience with REMICADE in the pediatric population have also included malignancies, including hepatosplenic T-cell lymphomas (see *Boxed WARNINGS* and *WARNINGS*), transient hepatic enzyme abnormalities, lupus-like syndromes, and the development of autoantibodies. **OVERDOSAGE:** Single doses up to 20 mg/kg have been administered without any direct toxic effect. In case of overdosage, it is recommended that the patient be monitored for any signs or symptoms of adverse reactions or effects and appropriate symptomatic treatment instituted immediately. **Administration Instructions Regarding Infusion Reactions** Adverse effects during administration of REMICADE have included flu-like symptoms, headache, dyspnea, hypotension, transient fever, chills, gastrointestinal symptoms, and skin rashes. Anaphylaxis might occur at any time during REMICADE infusion. Approximately 20% of REMICADE-treated patients in all clinical trials experienced an infusion reaction compared with 10% of placebo-treated patients (see *ADVERSE REACTIONS, Infusion-related Reactions*). Prior to infusion with REMICADE, premedication may be administered at the physician's discretion. Premedication could include antihistamines (anti-H1 +/- anti-H2), acetaminophen and/or corticosteroids. During infusion, mild to moderate infusion reactions may improve following slowing or suspension of the infusion, and upon resolution of the reaction, reinitiation at a lower infusion rate and/or therapeutic administration of antihistamines, acetaminophen, and/or corticosteroids. For patients that do not tolerate the infusion following these interventions, REMICADE should be discontinued. During or following infusion, patients that have severe infusion-related hypersensitivity reactions should be discontinued from further REMICADE treatment. The management of severe infusion reactions should be dictated by the signs and symptoms of the reaction. Appropriate personnel and medication should be available to treat anaphylaxis if it occurs.

**REFERENCES: 1.** *Am J Respir Crit Care Med.* 2000;161:S221–S247. **2.** See latest Centers for Disease Control guidelines and recommendations for tuberculosis testing in immunocompromised patients. **3.** Gardam MA, Keystone EC, Menzies R, et al. Anti-tumor necrosis factor agents and tuberculosis risk: mechanisms of action and clinical management. *Lancet Infect Dis.* 2003;3:148-155. **4.** Belhadj K, Reyes F, Farcet JP, et al. Hepatosplenic γδ T-cell lymphoma is a rare clinicopathologic entity with poor outcome: report on a series of 21 patients. *Blood.* 2003;102(13):4261-4269.



# Epratuzumab, Targeting CD-22, Shows Promise

BY NANCY WALSH
*New York Bureau*

PARIS — The anti-CD22 monoclonal antibody epratuzumab showed promise as a targeted therapy for systemic lupus erythematosus in two small studies, providing improvements in disease activity and health-related quality of life.

B cells play a central role in the pathogenesis of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), and a new potential therapeutic target is CD22, which is a glycoprotein present on the surface of B cells.

Unlike rituximab, which acts by depleting B cells, epratuzumab acts through regulating the activation of B cells and their interactions with T cells, Dr. Vibeke B. Strand reported at the annual European Congress of Rheumatology.

In all, 90 patients with severe SLE were randomized to receive placebo or epratuzumab in infusions of 360 mg/m$^2$ or 720 mg/m$^2$ for up to four treatment cycles. The first-cycle infusions were given at weeks 0, 1, 2, and 3; subsequent cycles consisted of two infusions, 1 week apart, every 12 weeks for up to 48 weeks.

All patients had antinuclear antibody (ANA)–positive disease and had experienced a severe (grade A) or moderate (grade B) British Isles Lupus Assessment Group (BILAG) flare. Stable doses of corticosteroids, immunosuppressants, and antimalarial drugs were permitted.

The two studies were initiated in 2005 but recruitment and dosing were discontinued prematurely in September 2006 because of an interruption in the drug supply. Patients continued to be followed, however, and the available data have now been analyzed.

At the time of study discontinuation, 29% of the intent-to-treat population had received all infusions over the entire 48-week period, and 91% had received at least four infusions.

Health-related quality of life was assessed using the Medical Outcomes Study short form–36 (SF-36), which evaluates physical functioning, pain, general health, vitality, social functioning, and mental health.

The treatment groups were comparable at baseline: Mean age was 37 years, mean body weight was 69 kg, 94% were female, and 67% were white.

Overall, patients had high disease activity, with 43% having one or more BILAG grade A flare; the mean total BILAG score was 13.2, according to Dr. Strand of Stanford (Calif.) University.

Burden of disease was also high, as shown by baseline scores on the physical and mental components of the SF-36 that were 1.5-2.0 and 0.6-1.2 standard deviations lower, respectively, than age and sex-matched controls and patients in previously reported SLE trials, she noted.

In all, 63% were receiving immunosuppressive drugs, 71% were receiving antimalarials, and 43% were being treated with doses of prednisone exceeding 25 mg/day at baseline.

By week 48, total BILAG scores in the epratuzumab groups were reduced to 6.3 from 13.2 at baseline, compared with reductions to 8.6 from 13.2 in the placebo group, Dr. Strand wrote.

"Although most patients did not receive full treatment courses and sample sizes were small, epratuzumab treatment resulted in clinically meaningful improvements in health-related quality of life," she concluded.

In a separate poster that also analyzed data from the two preliminary studies, Dr. Daniel Wallace of the University of California, Los Angeles, reported that cumulative corticosteroid use over 24 weeks—adjusted for race, baseline medications, and baseline differences—was lower in the epratuzumab groups.

At week 24, 24 (75%) patients receiving the 360-mg dose and 6 (100%) of those receiving the 720-mg dose were able to taper their corticosteroids, compared with 13 (57%) of those receiving placebo, according to Dr. Wallace.

Cumulative exposure to steroids was lower in the active treatment groups, with a least squares mean difference from placebo at 24 weeks of –1,051 mg and –1,973 mg for the 360-mg and 720-mg groups, respectively.

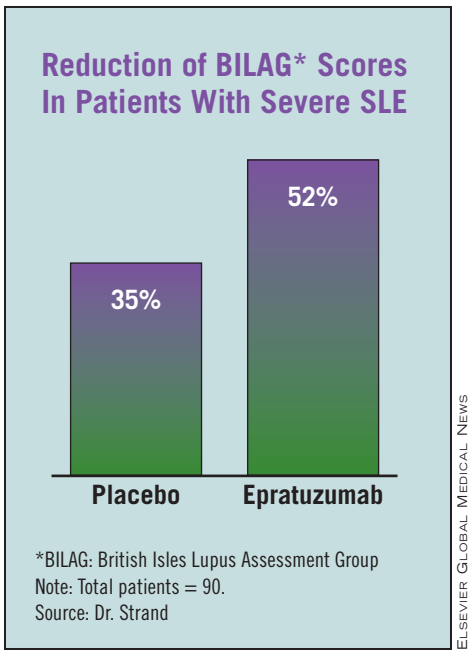
The incidence of treatment-emergent adverse events was similar in the active and placebo groups, with serious adverse events occurring in 30%, 25%, and 36% of patients in the placebo, 360-mg, and 720-mg groups, respectively, reported Dr. Wallace.

Serious infections occurred in 18% of the epratuzumab groups and in 22% of the placebo group.

Adverse events leading to discontinuation occurred in three patients in the placebo group and in three patients in the 720-mg group.

The manufacturer of epratuzumab, UCB Inc., has now initiated another pair of phase IIB trials, with the primary objective of determining the dose response and frequency.

Dr. Strand has disclosed receiving consulting fees from UCB. ■

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