

## Lenalidomide in multiple myeloma following stem cell transplant

Initial results from a Cancer and Leukaemia Group B study show that use of maintenance lenalidomide following autologous stem cell transplantation in patients with multiple myeloma reduces the risk of disease progression.

This study enrolled a total of 568 patients with multiple myeloma who had received no more than 12 months of prior therapy, and who had no previous history of a stem cell transplant. All participants received a transplant followed by melphalan; after the transplant, patients were randomised to take either lenalidomide or placebo until their disease progressed. Half of those randomised to placebo had disease progression within 25.9 months, whereas the median time to progression in the lenalidomide group could not be defined because fewer than half the patients had a worsening of their disease at that time. This was consistent with a 58% relative risk reduction in the risk of disease progression.

Celgene's shares rose nearly 10% in response to the news. If Revlimid can be shown to add benefit as a maintenance therapy and is approved as a first line treatment, it could increase sales from an expected Euros 1.2 billion this year to Euros 2.5 billion by 2013, according to a forecast.  
[www.revlimid.com](http://www.revlimid.com)

## Treatment partnership proposed for trabectedin

NICE's Appraisal Committee has recommended the approval of trabectedin for the treatment of advanced soft tissue sarcoma and submitted it to the Institute, which will rule in the new year. Trabectedin has been recommended as a treatment option for people with advanced soft tissue sarcoma if:

- treatment with anthracyclines and ifosfamide has failed or they are intolerant of or have contraindications for treatment with anthracyclines and ifosfamide, and
- the acquisition cost of trabectedin for treatment needed after the fifth cycle is met by the manufacturer. It is likely that trabectedin would increase overall survival by more than three months.

NICE uses incremental cost-effectiveness ratios (ICERs) to rate the cost of new drugs. The ICER is based on a comparison of the new drug with the current standard treatment, e.g. tissue plasminogen activator (t-PA) rather than streptokinase for the treatment of patients after myocardial infarction. The ICER is calculated by dividing the difference in costs between the new and old treatments by the difference in effects, to yield the additional cost per unit outcome. For trabectedin it is estimated at approximately Euros 36,800 per quality-adjusted life year (QALY) gained.

Source: NICE

## US FDA panel backs wider use of rosuvastatin

The FDA's Endocrinology and Metabolic Drugs Advisory Committee has recommended the use of rosuvastatin (Crestor) in certain patients who have no prior history of cardiovascular or cerebrovascular events or coronary heart disease.

The decision was based on a review of data from the 17,802-patient JUPITER study which demonstrated that rosuvastatin cuts deaths, heart attacks and strokes in middle-aged people with low-to-normal cholesterol but elevated high-sensitivity levels of C-reactive protein, an indicator of inflammation associated with heart disease. This could lead to millions of new patients being eligible for treatment.

Although LDL cholesterol and hsCRP reductions were only weakly correlated in individual patients, an overall 65% reduction in vascular events was seen in participants allocated to rosuvastatin who achieved both LDL cholesterol less than 1.8 mmol/L and hsCRP less than 2 mg/L versus a 33% reduction in those who achieved one or neither target.

The Anglo-Swedish firm is fighting off generic firms who are seeking to invalidate a patent on rosuvastatin. The companies challenging the patent, which expires in 2016, are Apotex, Aurobindo, Glenmark, Mylan, Par, Sandoz, Sun and Teva.

## Sanofi-aventis repositioning

Sanofi-aventis announced on 21 December 2009 plans to acquire US consumer healthcare company Chattem in a deal valued at approximately Euros 1.3 billion. The Paris-based firm said the purchase will create the world's fifth-largest consumer health company by revenue. The company plans to use the deal to convert its Allegra allergy drug to an OTC medicine marketed by Chattem.

The acquisition is the second-biggest by sanofi-aventis CEO Chris Viehbacher, since he took the helm a year ago. He has done more than a dozen deals in emerging markets, vaccines and now consumer health to replace revenue that will be lost to generic competition. Products that account for 20% of sanofi-aventis's annual sales will lose patent protection by 2013. Margins in these peripheral companies are not significantly lower than in the pharma business.