

Roche in Rheumatology: Changing the Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid Arthritis: the treatment gap

The prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) varies between 0.3% and 1% worldwide and is more common in women and in developed countries.ⁱ While there are many treatments available to help manage RA, a recent survey found that more than two thirds of RA patients experience pain despite their current treatment, and 80 percent believe that their treatment could be improved.ⁱⁱ While some treatments provide relief from the signs and symptoms of RA, only a small number of medications prevent the long-term progression of RA in the joints and around the body.ⁱⁱⁱ

A major goal of treating a person with RA is to help them reach remission, the point when all or most of the symptoms of the disease have gone away and further damage to the joints has stopped. Following positive results from a number of large international clinical trials, Roche believes the goal of remission can now be achieved.

Roche and autoimmune diseases

During the 1990s, researchers at Roche began to investigate the causes of RA, which has resulted in the discovery of innovative new therapies that target the key drivers of inflammation in RA and address a considerable unmet need. These solutions have helped change the way that RA is treated and make a positive difference to patients' lives.

The company's autoimmune franchise currently contains two treatments for RA, which have different modes of action and offer effective, alternative treatment options to physicians and patients, supported by trial data and clinical experience.

MabThera/Rituxan and RoACTEMRA/ACTEMRA

MabThera (rituximab), a selective B cell therapy, was the first licensed product within Roche's autoimmune franchise, representing a fundamentally different approach to treatment. Approved in 2006 for use in RA patients who do not benefit from, or who are unable to take current treatment options, including one or

more anti-TNFs, MabThera is now widely available.

MabThera is marketed in the US by Genentech and Biogen Idec under the brand name Rituxan[®]. In April 2011 the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of MabThera in combination with corticosteroids in Wegener's Granulomatosis (WG) and Microscopic Polyangiitis (MPA). WG and MPA are two severe forms of vasculitis called ANCA-Associated Vasculitis (AAV), a rare autoimmune disease that largely affects the small blood vessels of the kidneys, lungs, sinuses, and a variety of other organs.

RoACTEMRA/ACTEMRA (tocilizumab) is the first in a new class of treatments which target IL-6 receptors, a key driver of joint damage and chronic inflammation in patients with RA.^{iv} RoACTEMRA was approved in the European Union in January 2009 for the treatment of RA in patients who have either responded inadequately to, or who were intolerant to, previous therapy with one or more disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) or anti-TNFs. Approval by the US FDA followed in January 2010, for patients not responding adequately to treatment with a TNF inhibitor. On the 4th June 2010, RoACTEMRA received a license extension by the European Commission (EC) to reduce the rate of progression of joint damage and improve physical function when given in combination with methotrexate. RoACTEMRA is also approved for use in several other countries, including India, Brazil, Switzerland, Australia and Canada. RoACTEMRA is the result of research collaboration with Chugai and is being co-developed globally with Chugai.

In April 2011, the FDA approved RoACTEMRA for the treatment of Systemic juvenile idiopathic arthritis (sJIA) in patients two years of age and older, as a mono or combination therapy with methotrexate (MTX). sJIA is a subtype of juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), a group of conditions characterised by chronic arthritis in children.

Future treatments under investigation

As a company, Roche is already a leader in developing personalised healthcare solutions, for example within the oncology field. Now, the company is pursuing a similar approach within autoimmune diseases, by looking to identify specific RA patient profiles to help physicians determine the most appropriate treatment pathway, based on insights into how RA develops at the molecular level.

Company overview

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is a leader in research-focused healthcare with combined strengths in pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. Roche is the world's largest biotech company with truly

differentiated medicines in oncology, virology, inflammation, metabolism and CNS. Roche is also the world leader in *in-vitro* diagnostics, tissue-based cancer diagnostics and a pioneer in diabetes management. Roche's personalised healthcare strategy aims at providing medicines and diagnostic tools that enable tangible improvements in the health, quality of life and survival of patients. In 2010, Roche had over 80,000 employees worldwide and invested almost 9 billion Swiss francs in R&D. The Group posted sales of 47.473 billion Swiss francs. Genentech, US, is a wholly owned member of the Roche Group. Roche has a majority stake in Chugai Pharmaceutical, Japan.

For more information please visit: www.roche.com

References

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