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Tamiflu: Early Treatment of Influenza Can Halve the Duration of Illness

A new study presented today at the annual Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy (ICAAC), in Toronto, Canada, has revealed that Tamiflu, when taken within the first 12 hours of symptom onset, reduced the total duration of influenza by more than three days compared to treatment at 48 hours. The study entitled IMPACT (*IMmediate Possibility to ACcess oseltamivir Treatment*), demonstrates that early intervention with Tamiflu maximises the benefits of this effective treatment.

"The IMPACT study clearly shows that earlier intervention with Tamiflu reduces influenza symptoms," said Fred Aoki, M.D., University of Manitoba and lead author of the IMPACT report. "Another key result of the IMPACT study is that patients are able to recognise influenza symptoms and could present to their health care professional rapidly following first symptom onset".

About the IMPACT Study

The study investigated the relationship between time of intervention and maximum treatment benefit of Tamiflu, by treating as early as possible after symptom onset. 1428 patients were enrolled in the study of which two thirds had laboratory confirmed influenza. IMPACT clearly shows that time is crucial for the treatment of influenza: The earlier you take Tamiflu, the greater the predicted reduction of illness time. The data show that treating subjects with Tamiflu within 12 hours of first symptom onset could halve the total duration of illness, compared to intervention later than 2 days following first symptom onset.

About Tamiflu

Tamiflu, the first oral neuraminidase inhibitor, is a systemic treatment for all common strains of influenza (types A & B). It targets one of the two major surface structures of the influenza virus, the neuraminidase protein. The neuraminidase site is virtually the same in all common strains of influenza. If neuraminidase is inhibited, the virus is not able to infect new cells.

To date over 7000 patients (aged 1 – 97 years old) have received Tamiflu in the clinical trial programme. In these clinical studies, Tamiflu has been shown to be highly effective, well tolerated and has demonstrated a good profile. A significant reduction in the incidence of complications has also been demonstrated in Tamiflu patients.

Tamiflu treatment of influenza infected children aged above 1 year resulted in a significant reduction in the duration of illness and also significantly reduces the incidence of otitis media. This effect was particularly marked in pre-school age children, for whom effective treatment with Tamiflu reduces the risk of developing acute otitis media by over 50%. A study of once daily Tamiflu 75mg administered to close household contacts of influenza infected patients has also been shown to prevent clinical influenza by over 90 percent. In this study medication was given within 2 days of first onset of illness in the initial case and was continued for 7 days. Additional studies also found that long term use of Tamiflu prophylaxis (75 mg for 6 weeks) was safe and reduced the incidence of influenza in healthy adults during a community outbreak and in the frail elderly in a nursing home setting.

Tamiflu has been used to treat over three quarters of a million influenza sufferers in the USA, Canada and Switzerland where it was available during the last influenza season. Tamiflu has recently been launched for treatment of influenza in New Zealand and Latin America. It has been approved for the treatment of influenza by the Australian regulatory authority and approval for treatment and prophylaxis of influenza is pending in Japan. Approval is also pending in the US for the prevention of influenza and the treatment of influenza in children one year and older where it has granted expedited review.

Tamiflu was discovered by and co-developed with Gilead Sciences, Inc. (NASDAQ: GILD), California US. Roche markets Tamiflu worldwide.

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is one of the world's leading research-oriented healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals, diagnostics and vitamins. Roche's innovative products and services address prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, thus enhancing people's well-being and quality of life. Roche has approximately 62 000 employees and sells its products in over 170 countries. In the first half of 1999 the company reached sales of 13.7 billion CHF and a net income of 3 billion CHF and invested 1.9 billion CHF in Research and Development.

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