

Roche: Changing the Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis: the treatment gap

More than 20 million people worldwideⁱ and twice as many women as men suffer from RA.ⁱⁱ While there are many treatments available to help manage RA, up to 30% of patients fail to respond to treatment.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition, some treatments provide relief from the signs and symptoms of RA but do not prevent the long-term progression of RA in the joints and around the body.^{iv}

A major goal of treating a person with rheumatoid arthritis 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 is now within sight.

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 which 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 actions and offer effective, alternative treatment options to physicians and patients, supported by trial data and clinical experience.

MabThera and ACTEMRA

MabThera (rituximab), a selective B cell therapy, was the first licensed product within Roche's autoimmune franchise. Approved in 2006 for the treatment of RA in patients who have had an inadequate response or who were unable to take current treatment options, including one or more TNF inhibitors, MabThera is now widely available. MabThera is marketed in the US by Genentech and Biogen Idec under the brand name

Rituxan[®].

ACTEMRA (tocilizumab, RoACTEMRA within the EU) is the first in a new class of treatments for RA which target IL-6, a key driver of joint damage and chronic inflammation in patients with RA.^v 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 TNF inhibitors. It is also approved for use in several other countries, including India, Brazil, Switzerland and Australia. ACTEMRA is the result of research collaboration by Chugai and is being co-developed globally with Chugai.

Future treatments under investigation

Roche has compounds in Phase I, II and III clinical trials, notably, ocrelizumab, a fully humanised anti-CD20 antibody, which is in Phase III development for RA.

As a company, Roche is already a leader in developing personalized healthcare solutions, for example within the oncology field. Now, the company is pursuing a similar approach within autoimmune diseases, by looking to develop more targeted medicines tailored as closely as possible to individual patients' needs based on insights into how diseases arise at the molecular level.

Company overview

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is one of the world's leading research-focused healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. As the world's biggest biotech company and an innovator of products and services for the early detection, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, the Group contributes on a broad range of fronts to improving people's health and quality of life. Roche is the world leader in in-vitro diagnostics and drugs for cancer and transplantation, and is a market leader in virology. It is also active in other major therapeutic areas such as autoimmune diseases, inflammatory and metabolic disorders and diseases of the central nervous system. In 2007 sales by the Pharmaceuticals Division totalled 36.8 billion Swiss francs, and the Diagnostics Division posted sales of 9.3 billion francs. Roche has R&D agreements and strategic alliances with numerous partners, including majority ownership interests in Genentech and Chugai, and invested over 8 billion Swiss francs in R&D in 2007. Worldwide, the Group employs about 80,000 people. Additional information is available on the Internet at www.roche.com.

References:

ⁱ Arthritis Support - based on U.S. Census Bureau data, World Health Organization statistics and epidemiology studies <http://www.arthritisupport.com/library/showarticle.cfm/ID/879/T/Arthritis/cat/traditional/> Last accessed 21st May 2009

ⁱⁱ WHO report: The global burden of rheumatoid arthritis in the year 2000 http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/bod_rheumatoidarthritis.pdf Last accessed 21st May 2009

ⁱⁱⁱ Lawrence RC, Helmick CG *et al.* Estimates of the prevalence of arthritis and selected musculoskeletal disorders in the United States. *Arthritis Rheum* 1998;41:778-99

^{iv} Patient UK: Management of Rheumatoid Arthritis. <http://www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/40025263/> Last accessed 21st May 2009

^v Sebba A. Tocilizumab: The first interleukin-6-receptor inhibitor. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy* 2008;65(15):1413-1418