Health Bulletin

Newer Therapies Can Relieve Suffering For Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients

(NAPSA)—A leading medical journal, *The Lancet*, recently published an article showing that newer treatments can relieve suffering for the more than two million Americans with rheumatoid arthritis (RA). The article reported that three biologic treatments for RA—a debilitating disease that occurs when the immune system inappropriately attacks joint tissue—can reduce symptoms such as swelling, fatigue, stiffness and pain. Many RA patients don't respond adequately to biologic therapies such as anti-TNF drugs.

The article reviewed studies for three drugs: Rituxan® (rituximab) and Orencia® (abatacept), two biologic therapies approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of moderate-to-severe RA. The authors also reviewed data on tocilizumab, an agent that is not yet approved for RA. All three drugs were found to diminish signs and symptoms of RA.

"This research expands the range of treatments to fight RA," said Professor Josef Smolen, Division of Rheumatology at the Medical University of Vienna, Austria. "It shows there are more options for RA patients than first-line therapy, or more traditional treatments."

In clinical studies, Rituxan reduced RA symptoms by at least 20 percent in more than half of patients.

Mary Boudreau of Lawrenceburg, Indiana tried many RA treatments before she began receiving Rituxan. "I was vocal—I kept asking my doctor to try other treatments," said Boudreau.

Rituxan is the only approved biologic therapy that selectively targets CD20-positive B-cells. It has been used for more than 10 years in all approved indications, and has more than one million patient exposures when combined with its experience in non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Rituxan has been approved for the treatment of RA since 2006.

There is no cure for RA. Treatment is focused on reducing pain and inflammation with medicines such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) and disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs).

Rituxan is approved in combination with methotrexate to reduce signs and symptoms in adult patients with moderately-to-severely active RA who have had an inadequate response to one or more tumor necrosis factor antagonist therapies. With two infusions, Rituxan may provide efficacy that lasts through six months in patients with persistent, active disease despite anti-TNF therapy.

Rituxan has an established safety profile. Rituxan can cause the following serious side effects, some of which could be life-threatening: infusion reactions, tumor lysis syndrome, severe skin reactions and progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy. Other serious side effects with Rituxan include hepatitis B virus reactivation, heart problems, infections and stomach and bowel problems. Common side effects with Rituxan include fever, chills, shakes, itching, hives, sneezing, swelling, throat irritation or tightness and cough. These usually occur within 24 hours after the first infusion. Other common side effects include headache, nausea, upper respiratory tract infection and aching joints.

If you suffer from pain and other symptoms associated with RA, speak to your doctor if your treatment is not providing relief.

Learn More

For more information on RA, or a copy of the Rituxan full prescribing information, including BOXED WARNINGS, call (877) 474-8892 or visit www.rituxan.com.