New Treatment For Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients

(NAPSA)—Susan Karder suffers from rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic disease characterized by inflammation of the joints that can lead to irreversible joint destruction, pain and disability. Susan's pain became so unbearable that she wasn't able to keep up with her two teenage boys.

"It got to the point where I had to sit on the sidelines at my son's football game, instead of being able to run up and down the field with the other parents, because I was experiencing such severe pain and fatigue from RA," explains Susan.

Recently, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Actemra for the treatment of adult patients with moderately to severely active RA who have had an inadequate response to one or more tumor necrosis factor (TNF) antagonist therapies. It is the first drug approved to target the receptors of interleukin-6 (IL-6), a specific protein in the body that is often elevated in patients with RA.

"The FDA's approval of Actemra is great news for the many Americans suffering with this disease," said Mark Genovese, M.D., Actemra study investigator and professor of medicine and co-chief of the Division of Immunology and Rheumatology at Stanford University Medical Center. "Data from the clinical development program clearly establish Actemra and its unique mechanism of action as an important new option for RA patients who experience continued disease symptoms despite treatment with existing therapies."

Currently, RA affects about 1.3 million Americans. The symptoms of RA include redness, swelling, pain and movement-limitation around joints of the hands, feet, elbows, knees and neck that can lead to loss of function. After 10 years, less than 50 percent of people with this disease can continue to work or function normally on a daily basis. And it is estimated that approximately 30 to 40 percent of patients do not achieve adequate relief from their RA symptoms with currently available therapies.

"Despite treatment with existing drugs, many RA patients continue to experience the painful and debilitating symptoms of the disease," said Dr. Genovese. "With the availability of Actemra, patients now have an important new treatment option that may help them."

Susan agrees, "I went from sitting on a couch—unable to even stand without assistance—to being told to slow down when we went shopping."

Serious side effects associated with Actemra include serious infections that may lead to hospitalization or death, gastrointestinal perforations (a hole in the stomach or intestines) and hypersensitivity reactions including anaphylaxis. The most common AEs reported in clinical studies were upper respiratory tract infection, nasopharyngitis (inflammation of the nose and throat), headache, high blood pressure and increased liver enzymes. The increases in liver enzymes that were seen in patients were generally mild and reversible and did not result in apparent permanent or clinically evident hepatic injury. Laboratory changes, including increases in total cholesterol, the amount of fat circulating in the blood, and decreases in neutrophils (one of the cell types that helps fight infections) and platelets were seen. Treatments that suppress the immune system, such as Actemra, may cause an increase in the risk of cancer. For additional important safety information, including Boxed WARNINGS and Medication Guide, please visit www.actemra.com or call 1-800-Actemra (228-3672).

For more information, please visit actemra.com or gene.com.