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Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products

Public summary of opinion on orphan designation

Sitaxentan sodium for the for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension

Please note that this product was withdrawn from the Community Register of designated Orphan Medicinal Products in March 2013 on request of the Sponsor.

On 21 October 2004, orphan designation (EU/3/04/234) was granted by the European Commission to PPD Global Ltd, UK, for sitaxentan sodium for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension.

The sponsorship was transferred to Encysive (UK) Ltd, United Kingdom, in July 2005 and to Pfizer Limited, United Kingdom, in September 2010.

What is pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension?

Pulmonary arterial hypertension is a rare blood vessel disorder of the lung in which the pressure in the pulmonary artery (the blood vessel that leads from the heart to the lungs) rises above normal levels. An increase of the number of smooth muscle cells in the walls of small lung arteries (a phenomenon called proliferation) that are remodelling the vessels, may lead to obstructions in the microcirculation, which will then lead to an increase in the blood pressure.

Chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension is a complication representing less than 1% of all cases of acute pulmonary embolism (the sudden blocking of a lung artery by a clot or foreign material which has been brought to its site by the blood current), which directly leads to pulmonary hypertension. Pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension are chronically debilitating and life-threatening.

What is the estimated number of patients affected by the condition?

At the time of designation, pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension affected less than 2 in 10,000 people in the European Union (EU). This was equivalent to

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a total of fewer than 93,000 people*, and is below the threshold for orphan designation, which is 5 people in 10,000. This is based on the information provided by the sponsor and the knowledge of the Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products (COMP).

What treatments are available?

Several medicinal products were authorised for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension in the Community at the time of submission of the application for orphan drug designation.

Sitaxentan sodium might be of potential significant benefit for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension because it might act in a different way and thereby improve the long-term outcome of the patients. The benefit will have to be confirmed at the time of marketing authorisation. This will be necessary to maintain the orphan status.

How is this medicine expected to work?

Sitaxentan sodium opposes the effect of a substance called endothelin-1. Endothelin is a group of naturally produced substances, called hormones, released by the cells which are lining the inside surface of the blood vessels. Endothelin is known to be the most powerful substance that can cause narrowing of blood vessels. By blocking the effect of endothelin, the diameter of the blood vessel can normalise and this might induce a decrease of the blood pressure.

What is the stage of development of this medicine?

The effects of sitaxentan sodium were evaluated in experimental models.

At the time of submission of the application for orphan designation, clinical trials in patients with pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension were ongoing.

Sitaxentan sodium was not marketed anywhere worldwide for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension, at the time of submission. Orphan designation has been granted for sitaxentan in the United States for the same condition.

In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 141/2000 of 16 December 1999, the COMP adopted a positive opinion on 9 September 2004 recommending the granting of this designation.

Update: Sitaxentan sodium (Thelin) has been authorised in the EU since 10 August 2006 for the treatment of patients with pulmonary arterial hypertension classified as WHO functional class III, to improve exercise capacity. Efficacy has been shown in primary pulmonary hypertension and in pulmonary hypertension associated with connective tissue disease.

This medicine has been been withdrawn from use in the European Union since 2 March 2013.

More information on Thelin can be found in the European public assessment report (EPAR) on the Agency's website: ema.europa.eu/Find medicine/Human medicines/European Public Assessment Reports

*Disclaimer: For the purpose of the designation, the number of patients affected by the condition is estimated and assessed on the basis of data from the European Union (EU 25), Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
At the time of designation, this represented a population of 464,200,000 (Eurostat 2004.

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Opinions on orphan medicinal product designations are based on the following three criteria:

- the seriousness of the condition;
- the existence of alternative methods of diagnosis, prevention or treatment;
- either the rarity of the condition (affecting not more than 5 in 10,000 people in the EU) or insufficient returns on investment.

Designated orphan medicinal products are products that are still under investigation and are considered for orphan designation on the basis of potential activity. An orphan designation is not a marketing authorisation. As a consequence, demonstration of quality, safety and efficacy is necessary before a product can be granted a marketing authorisation.

For more information

Sponsor's contact details:

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For contact details of patients' organisations whose activities are targeted at rare diseases see:

- Orphanet, a database containing information on rare diseases which includes a directory of patients' organisations registered in Europe.
- European Organisation for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS), a non-governmental alliance of patient organisations and individuals active in the field of rare diseases.

Translations of the active ingredient and indication in all official EU languages[1], Norwegian and Icelandic

Language	Active ingredient	Indication
English	Sitaxentan sodium	Treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension and chronic thromboembolic pulmonary hypertension
Bulgarian	Натриев ситаксентан	Лечение на белодробна артериална хипертония и хронична тромбемболична белодробна хипертония
Czech	Sitaxentan sodný	Léčba plicní arteriální hypertenze a chronické tromboembolické plicní hypertenze
Danish	Sitaxentannatrium	Behandling af pulmonal arteriel hypertension og kronisk tromboembolisk pulmonal hypertension
Dutch	Natrium sitaxentan	Behandeling van pulmonale arteriële hypertensie en chronische trombo-embolische pulmonale hypertensie
Estonian	Sitaksentaannaatrium	Pulmonaalhüpertensiooni ja kroonilise tromboemboolse pulmonaalhüpertensiooni ravi
Finnish	Sitaxentan Sodium	Keuhkoverenkierron hypertensio ja krooninen tromboembolinen keuhkoverenpainetauti
French	Sitaxentan sodique	Traitement de l'hypertension artérielle pulmonaire et de l'hypertension pulmonaire thromboembolique chronique
German	Sitaxentan Natrium	Behandlung der pulmonalen arteriellen Hypertonie und der chronisch thromboembolischen pulmonalen Hypertonie
Greek	Σιταξεντάνη – άλας νατρίου	Θεραπεία της πνευμονικής αρτηριακής υπέρτασης και της χρόνιας πνευμονικής υπέρτασης θρομβοεμβολικής αιτιολογίας
Hungarian	Sitaxentan nátrium	Pulmonáris arteriális hipertónia és krónikus tromboembólia okozta pulmonáris hipertónia
Italian	Sitaxentan sodio	Trattamento dell'ipertensione arteriosa polmonare e dell'ipertensione polmonare cronica tromboembolica
Latvian	Sitaksentana nātrija sāls	Plaušu arteriālās hipertensijas un hroniskās tromboemboliskās plaušu hipertensijas ārstēšanai
Lithuanian	Natrio sitaksentanas	Plaučių arterinės hipertenzijos ir lėtinės tromboembolinės plaučių hipertenzijos gydymas
Maltese	Sitaxentan sodium	Kura ta' pressjoni arterjali pulmonari għolja u ta' pressjoni pulmonari trombo-embolika għolja kronika
Polish	Sytaksentan sodu	Leczenie tętniczego nadciśnienia płucnego oraz przewlekłego zakrzepowo-zatorowego nadciśnienia płucnego
Portuguese	Sitaxentan sódico	Tratamento da hipertensão arterial pulmonar e da hipertensão pulmonar tromboembólica crónica
Romanian	Sitaxentan sodium	Tratamentul hipertensiunii arteriale pulmonare şi al hipertensiunii pulmonare tromboembolice cronice
Slovak	Sitaxentan sodný	Liečba pľúcnej arteriálnej hypertenzie a chronickej tromboembolickej pľúcnej hypertenzie.

[1] At the time of transfer of sponsorship

Language	Active ingredient	Indication
Slovenian	Sitaksentan natrij	Zdravljenje pljučne arterijske hipertenzije in kronične tromboembolične pljučne hipertenzije
Spanish	Sitaxentan sódico	Tratamiento de la hipertensión arterial pulmonar y de la hipertensión pulmonar tromboembólica crónica
Swedish	Sitaxentannatrium	Behandling av pulmonell arteriell hypertension samt kronisk tromboembolisk pulmonell hypertension
Norwegian	Sitaxentan natrium	Behandling av pulmonal arteriell hypertensjon og kronisk tromboembolisk pulmonal hypertensjon
Icelandic	Natríum sítaxentan	Meðferð við háþrýstingi í lungnablóðrás og langvinnum háþrýstingi í lungnablóðrás í kjölfar segareks