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Questions and answers

Withdrawal of the marketing authorisation application for Fulphila (pegfilgrastim)

On 3 August 2017, Mylan S.A.S. officially notified the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) that it wishes to withdraw its application for a marketing authorisation for Fulphila, for reducing neutropenia in patients taking cancer treatments.

What is Fulphila?

Fulphila is a medicine that contains the active substance pegfilgrastim. It was to be available as a solution for injection under the skin.

Fulphila was developed as a 'biosimilar' medicine. This means that Fulphila was intended to be highly similar to a biological medicine already authorised in the European Union (the 'reference medicine') called Neulasta. For more information on biosimilar medicines, see here.

What was Fulphila expected to be used for?

Fulphila was to be used in cancer patients to reduce the duration of neutropenia (low levels of neutrophils, a type of white blood cell that fights infection) and the occurrence of febrile neutropenia (neutropenia with fever).

Neutropenia is a side effect of certain cancer treatments and can lead to development of serious infections.

How does Fulphila work?

The active substance in Fulphila and Neulasta, pegfilgrastim, consists of filgrastim that has been 'pegylated' (attached to a chemical called polyethylene glycol). Filgrastim is very similar to a human

30 Churchill Place ● Canary Wharf ● London E14 5EU ● United Kingdom
Telephone +44 (0)20 3660 6000 **Facsimile** +44 (0)20 3660 5555
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protein called granulocyte-colony-stimulating factor (G-CSF). It encourages the bone marrow to produce more neutrophils and improves the patient's ability to fight off infections.

Because filgrastim is pegylated, its removal from the body is slowed down, allowing the medicine to be given less often.

What did the company present to support its application?

The company presented results of studies designed to show that Fulphila is highly similar to its reference medicine Neulasta in terms of chemical structure, purity, the way it works and how the body handles the medicine. In addition, one study in 194 patients receiving cancer medicines compared the safety, effectiveness and immunogenicity, meaning the medicine's ability to trigger the production of antibodies, of Fulphila and Neulasta.

How far into the evaluation was the application when it was withdrawn?

The application was withdrawn after the CHMP had evaluated the initial documentation provided by the company and formulated a list of questions. The CHMP was assessing the company's responses to the questions at the time of the withdrawal.

What was the recommendation of the CHMP at that time?

Based on the review of the data, at the time of the withdrawal, the CHMP had some concerns and was of the provisional opinion that Fulphila could not have been approved to reduce neutropenia in patients taking cancer treatments.

One of the CHMP's main concerns was the lack of a certificate of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) for the manufacturing site of the product. Other concerns related to the description of the manufacturing process, the control of impurities in the active substance and the sterilisation of the final product.

Therefore, at the time of the withdrawal, the CHMP was of the opinion that the quality of Fulphila had not been demonstrated.

What were the reasons given by the company for withdrawing the application?

In its letter notifying the Agency of the withdrawal of the application, the company stated that it was withdrawing the application because a GMP certificate for the manufacturing site of Fulphila could not be obtained in the time available.

The withdrawal letter is available here.

What consequences does this withdrawal have for patients in clinical trials?

The company informed the CHMP that the withdrawal does not impact ongoing clinical trials with Fulphila.

If you are in a clinical trial and need more information about your treatment, contact the doctor who is giving it to you.