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Nov. 1-3, 2002, ASN Media Room, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Room 302,
215-418-2366 (media room), 240-381-7513 (after hours)

PURE RED CELL APLASIA IN PATIENTS RECEIVING EPO TREATMENT

A Clinical and Pharmaceutical Update

Philadelphia, PA (Nov. 2, 2002)—International investigators will present new findings on the cause, occurrence and treatment of Pure Red Cell Aplasia (PRCA) in patients with kidney disease who have been treated with a genetically engineered version of the protein, erythropoietin (EPO) at the American Society of Nephrology's (ASN) 35th Annual Renal Week Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. The Clinical Nephrology Conference will take place at 10:00 a.m. – Noon on Saturday, November 2 in Room 103 of the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

Pure Red Cell Aplasia is an uncommon condition in which antibodies to erythropoietin develop in association with a failure of the bone marrow to manufacture red blood cells, leaving patients with severe, treatment-resistant anemia (reported by Casadevall, et al, *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*, February 14, 2002). More than 100 patients in 14 countries who have received EPO treatment for the anemia of chronic or end-stage kidney disease (dialysis patients) have developed PRCA. So far, most of these cases have been observed in France, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. The risk of development of PRCA does not appear to be the same for all forms of EPO currently available for treatment of the anemia of chronic and end-stage kidney disease. The forms of EPO used in the United States appear to have a very low risk of being associated with the development of PRCA. The possible reasons that may underlie these differences will be discussed at the Conference. The condition is treated by stopping EPO, administering adrenal steroids and providing blood transfusions. Approximately 50 percent of patients with PRCA have recovered at this time.

“This emerging issue is of critical importance to all nephrologists treating the anemia of chronic renal disease,” says Richard Glasscock, MD, who is co-moderating the session with Eberhard Ritz, M.D.

(MORE)

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Anemia is a common problem with patients who develop advanced kidney disease. Normally, the kidneys produce erythropoietin, which stimulates the bone marrow to make red blood cells and prevent the onset of anemia. However, as the kidneys fail they lose their ability to produce erythropoietin. The genetically engineered product (EPO) has been used since 1986 to treat the anemia of chronic and end-stage kidney disease. It has greatly reduced the need for blood transfusions and improved the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of patients. To date, EPO has had a remarkable record of safety and efficacy for the treatment of anemia in kidney disease.

Speakers at the Conference will discuss the demographic and clinical details of PRCA cases in patients receiving EPO for kidney disease and its clinical implications for the current management of anemia. Fundamental scientific principles underlying the development of PRCA will be reviewed with respect to the immunogenicity of therapeutic proteins, as well as murine models of the disorder. The session will also feature an Open Forum discussion with speakers, moderators, and attendees.

"The purpose of the Conference is to make nephrologists aware of PRCA and to provide them with the latest information and research on the issue," says Dr. Ritz.

As the largest nephrology meeting of its kind, Renal Week 2002 is expected to draw more than 11,000 nephrologists to reveal the latest findings in renal research and in the care of patients with kidney and related disorders. The ASN is a not-for-profit organization of 8,700 physicians and scientists dedicated to the study and practice of nephrology and committed to providing a forum for the promulgation of information regarding the latest research and clinical findings on kidney diseases.

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