Introduction

In the last decade, the introduction of histamine H2 receptor blockers to the therapeutic armamentarium against ulcer disease has allowed great progress in the treatment of peptic ulcer. For the first time, physicians have drugs available that provide healing of 70-80% of peptic ulcers within 4-6 weeks. With their ease of ingestion, schedule of progressive reduction in number of daily doses, and absence of unpleasant flavor, these agents have quickly replaced anticholinergic and alkaline drugs commonly used until now to treat peptic ulcer.

However, problems in treating peptic ulcer still remain: (1) Twenty to thirty percent of patients do not have their ulcers healed within 4-6 weeks of treatment, and therapy must be extended to 3-4 months to increase the overall healing rate to 90%.

Although side effects with the histamine H2 receptor blockers have not been severe, their occurrence (mainly with long-term use) may necessitate stopping treatment.

Prosphylactic use to avoid gastroduodenal mucous membrane lesions resulting from stress or following use of anti-inflammatory drugs has not been confirmed.

(4) The recurrence rates with the histamine H2 receptor blockers used to date, although lower than that observed with placebo, vary greatly, depending on clinical and endoscopic criteria used in diagnosis. Recurrence rates up to 50% are still reported.

Thus, other histamine H2 receptor blockers have been investigated, with the goals being higher healing rates with short-term therapy (4-6 weeks), fewer side effects; drugs with a longer mean life, allowing fewer administrations per day and, therefore, better patient compliance; more effective drugs for hemorrhagic complications of peptic ulcer, and drugs more efficient as maintenance therapy to decrease recurrences.

Famotidine is one of the new and promising H2 receptor blockers, and its pharmacologic, toxicologic, and therapeutic properties in peptic ulcer have been investigated. In these proceedings, for the first time, the therapeutic potential and eventual advantages of famotidine are presented.

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