Summary and Conclusions

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Ondansetron Clinical Experience

Since ondansetron was launched over 3 years ago over 1 million patients have been treated. This sizeable and rapidly growing database has confirmed the effectiveness, and most importantly, the safety profile of ondansetron. Professor Marty hypothesised that this combination of efficacy and tolerability might allow us, with the use of chemoprotective agents, to increase the doses of cytotoxic drugs used and thereby enhance their therapeutic effectiveness. This is certainly a possible future development resulting from the use of these new agents.

Ondansetron Dosing Regimens

Ondansetron is effective when given as a single intravenous dose prior to chemotherapy followed by twice daily oral dosing. It is therefore easy and convenient to use for inpatients and outpatients. Indeed, the majority of chemotherapy regimens are given on an outpatient basis.

Ondansetron plus Dexamethasone

Dr. Rath and Dr. Roila showed that the combination of ondansetron plus dexamethasone represents a very effective treatment option for cisplatin-induced emesis. This combination is significantly superior to anti-emetic combinations previously thought to be optimal: metoclopramide plus dexamethasone and metoclopramide plus dexamethasone and diphenhydramine. Indeed, the use of ondansetron plus dexamethasone should not only be considered for patients receiving cisplatin chemotherapy but also patients given agents such as cyclophosphamide which can induce severe emesis, particularly in women.

Ondansetron in Radiotherapy-Induced Emesis

Ondansetron is effective in the control of emesis induced by a variety of radiotherapy schedules. Dr. Roberts described two comparative studies in which ondansetron was shown to be superior to conventional anti-emetics in the control of emesis induced by single high-dose radiotherapy and fractionated radiotherapy. Data was also presented which showed that ondansetron is effective in patients receiving total body and hemi-body irradiation. Anecdotal data was also presented which showed that ondansetron is able to 'switch off established emesis when used for the treatment of radiotherapy-induced emesis.

Impact of Ondansetron on Patients' Quality of Life

The quality of life of patients with cancer and undergoing chemotherapy treatment is an important consideration for the oncologist. Studies which formally assess patients' quality of life using validated instruments provide useful information which enable us to select appropriate treatment strategies. Studies using ondansetron which have assessed the quality of life of breast cancer patients have shown that ondansetron is not only associated with superior efficacy and tolerability but also with a better quality of life compared with standard anti-emetics.

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Cost-Effectiveness of Ondansetron Global Experience and Future Directions

Dr. Cox presented data from a prospective cost-effectiveness study which compared ondansetron with meto-clopramide in hospitalised patients receiving highly eme-togenic chemotherapy. Data was also presented using an economic model applied to patients receiving cyclophos-phamide-based chemotherapy for the treatment of breast cancer on an outpatient basis. These evaluations showed that the cost-effectiveness ratios of ondansetron and me-toclopramide in these situations are approximately equal. These studies used a three times-a-day ondansetron dosing schedule. The simplified ondansetron dosing schedules that have been established may render ondansetron more cost-effective than metoclopramide in these situations.

Dr. Butcher reviewed the ondansetron database, em-phasing that ondansetron gives excellent control of nausea and emesis in a number of clinical situations in the cancer field (e.g., testicular cancer, breast cancer, paediatrics) and also emesis induced by a variety of other stimuli such as postoperative nausea and vomiting. Future studies will further define the role of ondansetron in these clinical settings.

Conclusions

The objective of this symposium was to review the large ondansetron clinical database that now exists and discuss the latest clinical trial results. These data have shown that ondansetron is a highly effective and well-tolerated anti-emetic and will help clinicians to use this agent in an optimal manner.