Early Study of Merck Hep C Drugs Shows High Cure Rates

November 13, 2013

Merck's dual combination hepatitis C virus (HCV) therapy boasted near-perfect cure rates in an early trial, aidsmap reports. Representatives from the pharmaceutical company presented findings from their Phase II trial of 65 people with genotype 1a or 1b of hep C at the 64th Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) in Washington, DC.

Called C-WORTHY, the study included a regimen of the protease inhibitor MK-5172 and the NS5A inhibitor MK-8742, given with or without ribavirin for 12 weeks. The study participants, who were treatment-naive, had less advanced liver disease. The participants were divided into three groups, each receiving MK-5172 at 100 milligrams once a day: Group 1, which included genotypes 1a and 1b, received 20 mg of MK-8742 once a day plus ribavirin; Group 2, which included genotypes 1a and 1b, received 50 mg of MK-8742 once a day, plus ribavirin; and Group 3, which included genotype 1b only, received 50 mg of MK-8742 once a day without ribavirin.
Seven participants were not included in the study's primary analysis because four of them received the wrong doses of ribavirin; the others dropped out because of violations of study protocol or because they withdrew from study consent.

One hundred percent of Group 1 (21 out of 21 participants) achieved a sustained virologic response (SVR, considered a cure) 12 weeks after completing therapy; 96 percent of Group 2 (23/24) achieved an SVR; and 100 percent of Group 3 (11/11) were cured.

About one in five of those taking ribavirin developed anemia, although no one in the study stopped hep C treatment or required anemia treatment as a consequence.

Common side effects included fatigue, headache, nausea, diarrhea, dizziness and rash.

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

To read the conference abstract, click here.