New Hep C Treatment without Interferon on the Horizon

September 25, 2014 By Connie M. Welch

New hep C treatment without interferon and more without ribavirin are on the horizon. Several drug makers, including AbbVie Inc., Gilead Sciences Inc., Medivir AB, Janssen and Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. are expected to bring a new generation of hepatitis C drugs to the market in 2014 and 2015.

A focus on developing treatment without Interferon appears to be a goal, as well as higher cure rates of 90 to 99% percent. Shorter treatment time from 8 to 12 weeks is a far cry from standard treatment duration of 24 to 48 weeks, just two years ago. Fewer side effects are good news for hep C patients who could not tolerate Interferon with its harsh flu like symptoms and debilitating side effects.

The leader of the pack is Gilead Sciences with a brand new hep C drug currently under priority review with the FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration) expected to be approved and released in October of 2014.

The new treatment is a once-daily pill combining ledipasvir and sofosbuvir (Sovaldi) to treat adults with genotype 1 chronic hepatitis c infection. Genotype 1 is among 7 virus strains of hep C and the most difficult strain to fight. Among Hep C patients in the US 75% have genotype 1. Different treatment regimens are recommended for specific genotypes.

Good News

Reported from clinical trials (ION Studies) of approximately 2000 patients, the cure rates range 93 to 99 percent for 8 to 12 weeks of treatment with ledipasvir and sofosbuvir (Sovaldi).

Side effects using ledipasvir and sofosbuvir (Sovaldi) patients reported fatigue and headache to be the most common adverse effect.

Currently Gilead leads the market with the highest price hep C treatment. Sovaldi's current cost of $84,000 for treatment is likely to fall into competition from other drug companies offering similar treatment. Speculation is this could likely lower future treatment cost. A double blessing to be sure.

Gilead offers help and financial assistance through their program, Support Path for patients who cannot afford treatment or need help with co-pays. Many of the other drug companies offer help programs and direct patients to resources that offer medical and financial assistance.

Are you waiting for new hep C treatment?

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