Receptor blocker (SCH 532706) enters clinical trials

Another compound that can block the CCR5 receptor is called SCH 532706. Made by Schering Plough, this drug has been tested at a dose of 60 mg twice daily and when taken with the booster ritonavir (Norvir) it may have potential for once-daily dosing. This is because ritonavir raises levels of SCH 532706 in the blood for prolonged periods.

At CROI, researchers presented data from a small clinical trial where 12 HIV positive volunteers were given a combination of SCH 532706 with 100 mg of ritonavir twice daily for 10 consecutive days. For two weeks after this they did not receive any medications.

The average profile of participants at the start of the study was as follows:

- all were male
- age – 36 years
- CD4+ cell count – 327 cells
- viral load – about 40,000 copies
- 1/3 of participants had never previously used anti-HIV drugs
- 2/3 of participants had interrupted HAART for about 8 months before entering the present study

Results

During the first 10 days of the study, viral load fell by an average of 1.3 logs. After day 10 of the study, when participants stopped taking both SCH 532706 and ritonavir, viral load continued to fall for four more days, down to 1.6 logs below pre-study levels. This suggests that SCH 532706 persists in the blood for several days after a person stops taking it.

On the 20th day of the study, when participants were not taking any drugs, viral load had risen but was still one log below pre-study values.

During the study, the use of SCH 532706/ritonavir was not able to fully suppress viral loads below the 50-copy mark. But this was not unreasonable as participants were taking what is essentially SCH 532706 monotherapy.

By the 10th day of the study, CD4+ and CD8+ cell counts rose by 59 and 114 cells respectively. However, these gains were not sustained after that day.

Most side effects reported in this trial were mild, according to the study doctors. When they did occur, side effects included the following:

- diarrhea
- stomach pain
- nausea
- frequent bowel movements

About 25% of participants had higher-than-normal levels of the liver enzyme ALT in their blood while exposed to the study medications.

It is likely that further testing of SCH 532706/ritonavir will occur in the future.

REFERENCE:

Pett S, S Emery, K MacRae, et al. Safety and activity of SCH532706, a small molecule chemokine receptor 5
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