

**NIHR Innovation Observatory
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Ublituximab in combination with ibrutinib for high risk chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

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LAY SUMMARY

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL) is a type of cancer in which too many white blood cells are produced. These cells develop abnormally and are unable to function and fight infection. They also prevent the production of other healthy blood cells. As the disease is chronic, it develops very slowly over time. CLL is one of the most common type of leukaemia in adults, usually occurring in the elderly population. High risk CLL is cancer that does not get better with treatment. General symptoms of CLL include: fatigue, frequent infections, swollen lymph nodes (commonly in the neck, armpits and groin), anaemia, easy bruising/bleeding, enlarged spleen (causing tender lump in upper left abdomen), night sweats and weight loss.

The combination of ublituximab (intravenous infusions) and ibrutinib (oral capsules) is being developed as a new treatment option for patients with high risk CLL. Both drugs act in different unique ways to improve the body's natural defence to fight the cancer cells and their combined effect may significantly reduce symptoms of the disease and increase survival. If licensed, the combination of ublituximab and ibrutinib will offer an additional treatment option for patients with high risk CLL who have received other previous treatment. This combination has the potential to improve effectiveness by offering a quicker time to response and a greater depth of response compared with ibrutinib alone.

This briefing reflects the evidence available at the time of writing. A version of the briefing was sent to the company for a factual accuracy check. The company was unavailable to provide comment. It is not intended to be a definitive statement on the safety, efficacy or effectiveness of the health technology covered and should not be used for commercial purposes or commissioning without additional information.

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TARGET GROUP

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (high risk) – second line; in combination with ibrutinib

TECHNOLOGY

DESCRIPTION

Ublituximab (TG-1101) is a monoclonal antibody that targets a unique epitope on the B-lymphocyte CD20 antigen. Ublituximab has been bioengineered to deliver enhanced clinical activity and potency. Developed for the treatment of B-cell proliferative disorders, including Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma (NHL) and Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia (CLL), anti-CD20 antibodies target and aid in the depletion of B-lymphocytes.¹

Ibrutinib is a potent, small-molecule inhibitor of Bruton's tyrosine kinase (BTK). Ibrutinib forms a covalent bond with a cysteine residue (Cys-481) in the BTK active site, leading to sustained inhibition of BTK enzymatic activity. BTK, a member of the Tec kinase family, is an important signalling molecule of the B-cell antigen receptor (BCR) and cytokine receptor pathways. The BCR pathway is implicated in the pathogenesis of several B-cell malignancies, including mantle cell lymphoma, diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL), follicular lymphoma, and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL).²

The addition of ublituximab to ibrutinib is in the phase III clinical trial (NCT02301156) in previously treated CLL patients with high-risk cytogenetic features. Ublituximab was given by intravenous infusions (IV) at a dose of 900 mg on days 1, 8 and 15 of cycle 1 and day 1 of cycles 2-6 in combination with 420 mg ibrutinib orally once daily. Patients in the combination arm who had not progressed received quarterly infusions of ublituximab maintenance at 900 mg.³

Ublituximab is currently in phase III clinical development for patients with other hematologic malignancies and patients with multiple sclerosis.¹

Ublituximab does not currently have Marketing Authorisation in the EU for any indication.

INNOVATION and/or ADVANTAGES

Ibrutinib is effective in patients with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL), however, treatment resistance remains a problem. Ublituximab is a novel, type 1, anti-CD20m monoclonal antibody that binds to a unique epitope on the CD20 antigen, distinct from other treatment options of CLL such as rituximab, ofatumumab and obinutuzumab, and has been glycoengineered to exhibit a low-fucose fragment crystallizable (Fc) region, thereby demonstrating enhanced antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC).⁴

In a phase II study evaluating the combination therapy of ibrutinib and ublituximab for patients with relapsed/refractory CLL, 20 of the 45 enrolled patients with high risk features had an overall response rate of 95% with three patients (15%) achieving negative minimal residual disease and the median time to response was 8 weeks.⁴

If licensed, the combination of ublituximab and ibrutinib will offer an additional second-line treatment option for patients with high risk CLL with a potential to improve effectiveness by offering a quicker time to response and a greater depth of response for patients with relapsed and refractory CLL compared with ibrutinib alone.⁴

DEVELOPER

TG Therapeutics

REGULATORY INFORMATION/ MARKETING PLANS

Ublituximab is a designated orphan drug in the USA for CLL granted in August 2010.⁵

The recombinant chimeric monoclonal antibody against CD20 is a designated orphan drug in the EU for CLL granted in November 2009.⁶

PATIENT GROUP

BACKGROUND

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL). is a type of B lymphocyte cancer. B lymphocytes are a type of white blood cells (leukocytes). In CLL, abnormal white blood cells develop from the lymphoid blood stem cells. These leukaemia cells are unable to function as normal lymphocytes and can accumulate in the blood and bone marrow, preventing the production of healthy blood cells. As a chronic leukaemia, CLL develops slowly over time.

High risk or relapsed/refractory CLL is cancer that does not get better with treatment.⁷ Refractory CLL is when some people do not respond to treatment while relapsed CLL is when some respond to treatment but develop CLL again after initial treatment. High risk would generally be regarded as the subgroup of patients who require treatment for progressive disease but also show features suggesting that they are expected to have a poorer outcome than average.⁸

CLL is one of the most common types of leukaemia in adults. It is most common in those over 60 years old and rarely occurs in those under 40 years old.⁹ Because CLL develops slowly, people often have no symptoms in early stages. General symptoms of CLL include: fatigue, frequent infections, swollen lymph nodes (commonly in the neck, armpits and groin), anaemia, easy bruising/bleeding, enlarged spleen (causing tender lump in upper left abdomen), night sweats and weight loss.¹⁰

Various risk factors CLL have been identified, including: a family history of CLL, exposure to electromagnetic radiation, the presence of a compromised immune system (HIV/AIDS patients or individuals on immunosuppressive medication) and exposure to certain hair dyes. CLL is also more common in men and people of Australian, American and European origin.¹¹ Several genetic changes have also been identified and are regularly tested for as part of a CLL diagnosis. Deletions or mutations in these genes can change CLL prognosis and treatment. 30-50% people with CLL have a 13q deletion which results in an extremely slow developing type of CLL that may not require treatment for many years.¹²

CLINICAL NEED and BURDEN OF DISEASE

In 2015, the crude incidence rate of CLL (ICD-10: C91.1) in England was 5.9 per 100,000 population and in the UK, the crude incidence rate of CLL was 5.7 per 100,000 population.¹³

In 2014, CLL accounted for less than 1% of cancer deaths in the UK. There were 628 (61%) CLL deaths in males and 405 (39%) CLL deaths in females (male: female ratio of 16:10). This equates to a crude mortality rate of 2 per 100,000 in males and 1 per 100,000 in females.¹⁴

In 2016-17, there were 25,509 admissions for chronic lymphoid leukaemia of B-cell type (ICD-10:C91.1) in England, resulting in 13,926 bed days and 26,404 finished consultant episodes.¹⁵

PATIENT PATHWAY

RELEVANT GUIDANCE

NICE GUIDANCE

- NICE technology appraisal in development. Leukaemia (chronic lymphocytic, relapsed) – ofatumumab (maintenance) (GID – TAG482). Expected date of issue to be confirmed.
- NICE technology appraisal in development. Leukaemia (chronic lymphocytic) – idelalisib (with ofatumumab) (GID – TA10008). Expected date of issue to be confirmed.
- NICE technology appraisal in development. Idelalisib with bendamustine and rituximab for previously treated chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (GID – TA10109). Expected date of issue to be confirmed.
- NICE technology appraisal in development. Venetoclax in combination with rituximab for treating relapsed or refractory chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (GID – TA10160). Expected February 2019.
- NICE technology appraisal. Venetoclax for treating chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (TA487). November 2017.
- NICE technology appraisal. Ibrutinib for previously treated chronic lymphocytic leukaemia and untreated chronic lymphocytic leukaemia with 17p deletion or TP53 mutation (TA429). January 2017.
- NICE technology appraisal. Idelalisib for treating chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (TA359). October 2015.
- NICE technology appraisal. Obinutuzumab in combination with chlorambucil for untreated chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (TA343). June 2015.
- NICE technology appraisal. Ofatumumab in combination with chlorambucil or bendamustine for untreated chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (TA344). June 2015.
- NICE technology appraisal. Bendamustine for the first-line treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (TA216). February 2011.
- NICE technology appraisal. Ofatumumab for the treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia refractory to fludarabine and alemtuzumab (TA202). October 2010.
- NICE technology appraisal. Rituximab for the treatment of relapsed or refractory chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (TA193). July 2010.
- NICE technology appraisal. Rituximab for the first-line treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (TA174). July 2009.
- NICE technology appraisal. Fludarabine monotherapy for the first-line treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (TA119). February 2007.

NHS ENGLAND and POLICY GUIDANCE

- NHS England. 2017 NHS Clinical Commissioning Policy: Second allogeneic haematopoietic stem cell transplant for relapsed disease (all ages). 16068/P
- NHS England. 2013/14 NHS Standard Contract for Cancer: Chemotherapy (Adult). B15/S/a
- NHS England. 2013/14 NHS Standard Contract for Cancer: Radiotherapy (All Ages). B01/S/a
- NHS England. Clinical Commissioning Policy: Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation. NHSCB/B04/P/a. April 2013

OTHER GUIDANCE

- Follows et al. Interim statement from the BCSH CLL Guidelines Panel. 2017¹⁶
- Ladetto et al. ESMO consensus conference on malignant lymphoma: general perspectives and recommendations for prognostic tools in mature B-cell lymphomas and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia. 2016¹⁷
- Eichhorst et al. Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia: ESMO Clinical Practice Guidelines for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up. 2015¹⁸
- Agrawal. Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia Guidelines. 2015¹⁹
- Oscier et al. Guidelines on the diagnosis, investigation and management of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia. 2012²⁰

CURRENT TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment options for relapsed/refractory CLL will vary mainly according to response to previous treatments.

Guidelines recommend the use of:

- Medicinal products:
 - Bendamustine – for those where fludarabine based treatment is inappropriate²¹
 - Ibrutinib (alone) – for those who have had at least 1 prior therapy or for those with 17p deletion/TP53 mutation and in whom chemo-immunotherapy is unsuitable²²
 - Rituximab in combination with fludarabine and cyclophosphamide – for people with relapsed or refractory CLL²³
 - Venetoclax in patients:²⁴
 - with a 17p deletion or TP53 mutation and whose disease has progressed after a B-cell receptor pathway inhibitor or
 - without a 17p deletion or TP53 mutation, and whose disease has progressed after both chemo-immunotherapy and a B-cell receptor pathway inhibitor and
- Stem cell and bone marrow transplant – high dose chemotherapy and radiotherapy followed by transplantation of stem cells from a genetically similar donor (allogenic).²⁵
- Radiotherapy –should be considered for patients for whom chemo-immunotherapy has been ineffective or is contra-indicated and can provide effective palliation in cases with symptomatic bulky lymphadenopathy.²⁶

Other treatment options intended for secondary effects of CLL and/or CLL treatment include:²⁷

- Supportive therapies for CLL e.g. immunoglobulin replacement therapy – to help prevent/treat infections
- Antibiotic, antifungal and antiviral medications – to treat infections in CLL patients
- Granulocyte-colony stimulating factor (G-CSF) injections – to boost white blood counts
- Blood transfusions – to treat severe anaemia or bleeding and bruising problems

EFFICACY and SAFETY

Trial	NCT02013128 , UTX-IB-104; Ublituximab in combination with Ibrutinib in Select B-cell Malignancies; phase I/II
Sponsor	TG Therapeutics, Inc.
Status	Completed.
Source of Information	Trial registry ²⁸
Location	USA
Design	Single group assignment
Participants	N=62; aged 18 years and older; confirmed Mantle Cell lymphoma (MCL) open for enrolment; refractory to or relapsed after at least 1 prior treatment regimen; eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) score of 0 to 2
Schedule	Subjects received ublituximab intravenous (IV) infusion dose on days 1, 8 and 15 followed by maintenance infusions and ibrutinib fixed oral daily dose. Subjects received ublituximab IV fusion in combination with ibrutinib at an oral daily dose for subjects with CLL MCL.
Follow-up	-
Primary Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To evaluate the safety of ublituximab in combination with ibrutinib in patients with select B-cell malignancies [Time Frame: 28 days (1 cycle of therapy)] • To determine the incidence of adverse events, any potential abnormal laboratory results and any dose-limiting toxicities
Secondary Outcomes	Overall response rate [Time frame: up to 1 year]
Key Results	-
Adverse effects (AEs)	-
Expected reporting date	-

Trial	GENUINE Study, NCT02301156 , UTX-IB-301; high-risk CLL; Ublituximab in Combination with Ibrutinib Versus Ibrutinib alone; phase III
Sponsor	TG Therapeutics, Inc.
Status	Completed
Source of Information	Trial registry, ²⁹ abstract, ³⁰ press release ³
Location	USA, Israel
Design	Randomised, parallel assignment

Participants	n=126; aged 18 years and older; relapsed/refractory CLL requiring treatment
Schedule	Randomised to ublituximab intravenously at a dose of 900 mg on days 1, 8 and 15 of cycle 1 and day 1 of cycles 2-6 followed by maintenance quarterly infusions at 900 mg and every 3 cycles thereafter in combination with ibrutinib orally at 420 mg once daily; or ibrutinib orally at 420 mg once daily alone
Follow-up	Median follow up: 11.4 months
Primary Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall Response Rate (ORR) - Every 8-12 weeks, up to 2 years
Secondary Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete response (CR) rate • Safety • Duration of response (DoR) • Time to response (TTR) • Progression-Free Survival (PFS) • Minimal residual disease (MRD) negativity
Key Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GENUINE study met its primary endpoint, demonstrating that ublituximab in combination with ibrutinib yields superior ORR to ibrutinib alone in high-risk CLL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ORR 78% (UTX+IB) vs.45% (IB), p<0.001 - CR rate 7% vs. 0 (secondary endpoint) - MRD rate 19% vs 2% (secondary endpoint), p<0.01 • Secondary endpoint shows trend (HR=0.559) in improvement of PFS however not statistically significant at time of analysis • With the exception of infusion related reactions, ublituximab did not alter the safety profile of ibrutinib monotherapy
Adverse effects (AEs)	<p>The most common adverse events (reported in ≥10% of the combination treated subjects) included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infusion reaction • Diarrhoea • Fatigue • Insomnia • Nausea • Headache • Arthralgia • Cough • Abdominal pain • Stomatitis • Upper Respiratory Infection • Dizziness • Contusion • Anaemia • Peripheral Edema
Expected reporting date	-

ESTIMATED COST and IMPACT

COST

The cost of ublituximab is not yet known.

IMPACT – SPECULATIVE

IMPACT ON PATIENTS AND CARERS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduced mortality/increased length of survival | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduced symptoms or disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> No impact identified |

IMPACT ON HEALTH and SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased use of existing services | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decreased use of existing services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Re-organisation of existing services | <input type="checkbox"/> Need for new services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> None identified |

IMPACT ON COSTS and OTHER RESOURCE USE

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased drug treatment costs | <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced drug treatment costs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other increase in costs | <input type="checkbox"/> Other reduction in costs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None identified |

OTHER ISSUES

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical uncertainty or other research question identified | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None identified |
|---|---|

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