Aspirin and Esomeprazole Appear Safe for Barrett’s

BY FRAN LOWRY
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ORLANDO — Early findings from the Aspirin Esomeprazole Chemoprevention Trial (AspECT) in September 2005, 1,192 (83%) of the 1,436 patients have remained on their medication, and just 33 adverse events have been reported, said the study’s lead investigator Dr. Janusz Jankowski, professor of medicine, Oxford University (England), at a meeting on gastrointestinal cancers sponsored by the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

AspECT is an ambitious, 10-year clinical trial being conducted in the United Kingdom. The investigators are still recruiting to meet their goal of 3,000 patients. The trial’s primary aim is to determine whether treatment with the proton pump inhibitor esomeprazole (Nexium, AstraZeneca) and aspirin can stop Barrett’s metaplasia from progressing to adenocarcinoma.

The investigators are also trying to determine whether this therapy will prevent or reduce myocardial infarction.

The United Kingdom is fertile ground for such a study, Dr. Jankowski said at the symposium, also sponsored by the AGA Institute, the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology, and the Society of Surgical Oncology.

“Tenofovir Beats Adefovir at Hep B Viral Suppression

BOSTON — Tenofovir suppresses viral load more rapidly and effectively than adefovir does in patients with HBe antigen-negative chronic hepatitis B, Dr. Patrick Marcellin reported at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases.

Although both patient groups experienced a rapid decline in viral load by week 4 of the 48-week trial, those taking tenofovir experienced a steeper decline and a higher response rate, said Dr. Marcellin of the Hospital Beaujon, Clichy, France.

Both groups achieved rapid suppression of hepatitis B virus DNA, with the majority of responsive patients doing so by week 4. By week 48, however, response differences emerged. Significantly more tenofovir-treated patients than adefovir-treated patients achieved viral loads below 400 copies/mL (93% versus 63%, respectively).

Tenofovir, which is already approved for the treatment of HIV, is becoming a popular alternative for patients who develop resistance to adefovir, Dr. Marcellin said.

The phase III study was sponsored by Gilead Sciences Inc., Durham, N.C., the company that manufactures tenofovir. Dr. Marcellin disclosed he has a financial relationship with Gilead Sciences.

— Michele G. Sullivan

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