Psoriasis Responds to Intermittent Etanercept

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KOHALA COAST, HAWAI'I — New data suggest that etanercept can be given intermittently like other psoriasis treatments, according to a poster that Alice B. Gottlieb, M.D., presented at a conference on clinical dermatology sponsored by the Center for Bio-Medical Communication Inc.

The study was funded in part by the makers of etanercept, Immunex Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of Amgen Inc. Dr. Gottlieb is a consultant and speaker for the company. An Amgen employee served as a coinvestigator in the study.

The percentages of patients who achieved at least a 75% improvement in PASI scores ranged from 14% to 49% after the first 12 weeks of treatment (depending on dosage group) and 19%-45% after 12 weeks of retreatment and was generally well tolerated by patients.

DR. GOTTLIEB

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In the 297 patients who stopped and restarted etanercept, mean PASI scores were 19 at baseline, 6 after the initial 12 weeks of treatment and before disease relapse, and 6 after 12 weeks of retreatment. About 33% of the 297 patients developed an adverse event during retreatment and 32% developed infection, rates that were similar to those seen in the initial treatment phase of the study.

Stopping etanercept was not associated with severe flares of disease or conversion of psoriasis morphology, and was generally well tolerated by patients, according to Dr. Gottlieb. Retreatment was not associated with an increase in antigenicity to etanercept or with formation of neutralizing antibodies to etanercept.

A subset analysis of 232 patients who achieved at least a 75% improvement in PASI scores after the first 24 weeks of treatment found that a median of 91 days passed between stopping therapy and disease relapse.

Etanercept is a fully human soluble tumor necrosis factor that has been approved for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and psoriasis. Many psoriasis drugs are used intermittently or in a rotating manner because they lose their effectiveness over time or cause cumulative, dose-dependent toxicity. Etanercept does not appear to produce cumulative toxicity with chronic, continuous treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, according to Dr. Gottlieb.