



COMMITTEE FOR ORPHAN MEDICINAL PRODUCTS

**PUBLIC SUMMARY OF
POSITIVE OPINION FOR ORPHAN DESIGNATION
OF
aplidine
for the treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia**

On 9 July 2003, orphan designation (EU/3/03/151) was granted by the European Commission to Pharma Mar SA Sociedad Unipersonal, Spain, for aplidine for the treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia.

What is acute lymphoblastic leukaemia?

Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia is a disease in which cancer cells are found in the blood and the bone marrow. The bone marrow is the spongy tissue inside the large bones in the body. Normally, the bone marrow makes cells called “blasts” that mature into several different types of blood cells that have specific functions in the body. These include red cells, white cells and platelets. Red blood cells carry oxygen and other materials to all tissues of the body. White blood cells fight infection. Platelets make the blood clot. When leukaemia develops, the bone marrow produces large numbers of abnormal blood cells. There are several types of leukaemias. Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia is a cancer of certain white blood cells called lymphocytes. In this disease the lymphocytes multiply too quickly and live too long, so there are too many of them circulating in the blood. These leukaemic lymphocytes look normal, but they are not fully developed and do not work properly. Over a period of time these abnormal cells replace the normal white cells, red cells and platelets in the bone marrow. It is the most common type of leukaemia in young children. This disease also affects adults, especially those aged 65 and older. Many people with acute leukaemia can be cured. However, despite the available treatments, acute lymphoblastic leukaemia remains a serious and life threatening condition in a subgroup of patients.

What are the methods of treatment available?

Treatment for leukaemia is complex and depends on a number of factors including the type of leukaemia, the extent of the disease and whether the leukaemia has been treated before. It also depends on the patient's age, symptoms, and general health. Treatments that had been authorised at the time of submission of the application for orphan drug designation included different chemotherapeutic agents (drugs to kill cancer cells). Bone marrow transplantation is also available.

Satisfactory argumentation has been submitted by the sponsor to justify the assumption that aplidine might be of potential significant benefit for the treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, because it may act in a different way than other available medicines. This assumption will have to be confirmed at the time of marketing authorisation. This will be necessary to maintain orphan status.

What is the estimated number of patients affected by the condition*?

According to the information provided by the sponsor, acute lymphoblastic leukaemia was considered to affect about 15,000 persons in the European Union.

How is this medicinal product expected to act?

Aplidine is a medicinal product originally isolated from a marine organism called *Aplidium albicans* and currently obtained by total synthesis. It is a compound formed by molecules called peptides that can combine and form proteins. The mechanism of action of aplidine is under investigation but might block the growth of the leukaemia cells and might help in the destruction of these cells.

What is the stage of development of this medicinal product?

The effects of aplidine were evaluated in experimental models. At the time of submission of the application for orphan designation, no clinical trials in patients with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia were initiated.

Aplidine was not marketed anywhere worldwide for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia or designated as orphan medicinal product elsewhere for this condition, at the time of submission.

According to Regulation (EC) No 141/2000 of 16 December 1999, the Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products (COMP) adopted on 13 June 2003 a positive opinion recommending the grant of the above-mentioned designation.

Opinions on orphan medicinal products designations are based on the following cumulative criteria: (i) the seriousness of the condition, (ii) the existence or not of alternative methods of diagnosis, prevention or treatment and (iii) either the rarity of the condition (considered to affect not more than five in ten thousand persons in the Community) or the insufficient return of development investments.

Designated orphan medicinal products are still investigational products which were considered for designation on the basis of potential activity. An orphan designation is not a marketing authorisation. As a consequence, demonstration of the quality, safety and efficacy will be necessary before this product can be granted a marketing authorisation.

For more information:

Sponsor's contact details:

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*Disclaimer: The number of patients affected by the condition is estimated and assessed for the purpose of the designation, for a European Community population of 385,000,000 (Eurostat 2002) and may differ from the true number of patients affected by the condition. This estimate is based on available information and calculations presented by the sponsor at the time of the application.

Patients' associations contact points:

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Translations of the active ingredient and indication in all EU languages

Language	Active Ingredient	Indication
English	Aplidine	Treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia
Danish	Aplidine	Behandling af akut lymfoblastisk leukæmi
Dutch	Aplidine	Behandeling van acute lymfoblastenleukemie
Finnish	Aplidine	Akuutin lymfaattisen leukemian hoito
French	Aplidine	Traitement de la leucémie lymphoblastique aiguë
German	Aplidine	Benhandlung der acuten lymphoblastischen Leukämie
Greek	Aplidine	Θεραπεία της οξείας λεμφοβλαστικής λευχαιμίας
Italian	Aplidine	Trattamento della leucemia linfoblastica acuta
Portuguese	Aplidine	Tratamento da leucemia linfoblástica aguda
Spanish	Aplidine	Tratamiento de la leucemia linfoblástica aguda
Swedish	Aplidine	Behandling av akut lymfoblastleukemi