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EMA/COMP/450237/2016
Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products

Public summary of opinion on orphan designation

Sodium benzoate for the treatment of ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency

On 14 July 2016, orphan designation (EU/3/16/1705) was granted by the European Commission to Lucane Pharma SA, France, for sodium benzoate for the treatment of ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency.

What is ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency?

Ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency is one of the inherited disorders known as 'urea-cycle disorders', which cause ammonia to accumulate in the blood. Patients with ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency lack ornithine transcarbamylase, one of the liver enzymes needed to get rid of excess nitrogen. In the absence of this enzyme, excess nitrogen accumulates in the body in the form of ammonia, which can be harmful at high levels, especially to the brain. Symptoms of the disease may appear in the first few days of life (particularly in boys) and include lethargy (lack of energy), vomiting, loss of appetite, seizures (fits) and coma, often leading to death. However, age of onset is highly variable, particularly in females.

Ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency is a long-term debilitating and life-threatening disease that leads to altered brain function and is associated with poor overall survival.

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

At the time of designation, ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency affected less than 0.1 in 10,000 people in the European Union (EU). This was equivalent to a total of fewer than 5,000 people^{*}, and is below the ceiling for orphan designation, which is 5 people in 10,000. This is based on the information provided by the sponsor and the knowledge of the Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products (COMP).

What treatments are available?

At the time of designation, sodium phenylbutyrate (Ammonaps, Pheburane) and glycerol phenylbutyrate (Ravicti) were authorised in the EU for the treatment of some urea-cycle disorders, including ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency. In addition, patients were advised to control their

^{*}Disclaimer: For the purpose of the designation, the number of patients affected by the condition is estimated and assessed on the basis of data from the European Union (EU 28), Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. This represents a population of 513,700,000 (Eurostat 2016).

dietary intake of proteins, which are rich in nitrogen, to reduce the amount of ammonia formed in the body. Liver transplantation was used to manage the condition in some people.

The sponsor has provided sufficient information to show that sodium benzoate might be of significant benefit for patients with ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency because its use together with currently authorised treatments may lead to improved effects. This assumption will need to be confirmed at the time of marketing authorisation, in order to maintain the orphan status.

How is this medicine expected to work?

Sodium benzoate has been used as an unlicensed treatment for hyperammonaemia (high levels of ammonia in the blood).

It works by combining with the amino acid glycine, which contains nitrogen, to form a substance that can be removed from the body by the kidneys. This allows the levels of nitrogen in the body to decrease, reducing the amount of ammonia produced and therefore the damage to the brain and other organs.

What is the stage of development of this medicine?

At the time of submission of the application for orphan designation, no clinical trials with sodium benzoate in patients with ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency had been started. The sponsor presented data from the published literature on the use of sodium benzoate in urea cycle disorders.

At the time of submission, sodium benzoate was not authorised anywhere in the EU for ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency or designated as an orphan medicinal product elsewhere for this condition.

In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 141/2000 of 16 December 1999, the COMP adopted a positive opinion on 16 June 2016 recommending the granting of this designation.

Opinions on orphan medicinal product designations are based on the following three criteria:

- the seriousness of the condition;
- the existence of alternative methods of diagnosis, prevention or treatment;
- either the rarity of the condition (affecting not more than 5 in 10,000 people in the EU) or insufficient returns on investment.

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

For more information

Sponsor's contact details:

Contact details of the current sponsor for this orphan designation can be found on EMA website, on the medicine's [rare disease designations page](#).

For contact details of patients' organisations whose activities are targeted at rare diseases see:

- [Orphanet](#), a database containing information on rare diseases, which includes a directory of patients' organisations registered in Europe;
- [European Organisation for Rare Diseases \(EURORDIS\)](#), a non-governmental alliance of patient organisations and individuals active in the field of rare diseases.

Translations of the active ingredient and indication in all official EU languages¹, Norwegian and Icelandic

Language	Active ingredient	Indication
English	Sodium benzoate	Treatment of ornithine transcarbamylase deficiency
Bulgarian	Натриев бензоат	Лечение на дефицит на орнитин транскарбамилаза
Croatian	Natrijev benzoat	Liječenje nedostatka ornitin-transkarbamilaze
Czech	Benzoát sodný	Léčba nedostatku transkarbamylázy ornithine
Danish	Natriumbenzoat	Behandling af ornithin transcarbamylase defect
Dutch	Natriumbenzoat	Behandeling van ornithine transcarbamylase deficiëntie
Estonian	Naatriumbensoaat	Ornitiintranskarbamülaasi puudulikkuse ravi
Finnish	Natriumbentsoatti	Ornitiinitranskarbamylaasin puutoksen hoito
French	Benzoate de sodium	Traitement du déficit en ornithine transcarbamylase
German	Natriumbenzoat	Behandlung des Ornithintranscarbamylase-Mangels
Greek	Βενζοϊκό νάτριο	Αγωγή για την έλλειψη της τρανσκαρβαμυλάσης της ορνιθίνης
Hungarian	Nátrium benzoát	Ornitin transzkarbamiláz hiány kezelése
Italian	Benzoato di sodio	Trattamento del deficit di ornitina-transcarbamilasi
Latvian	Nātrija benzoāts	Ornitīna transkarbamilāzes nepietiekamības ārstēšana
Lithuanian	Natrio benzoatas	Ornitrintranskarbamilazės stokos gydymas
Maltese	Sodium benzoate	Kura ta' defiċjenza ta' l-Ornithine Transcarbamylase
Polish	Benzoesan sodu	Leczenie pacjentów z niedoborem transkarbamylazy ornitynowej
Portuguese	Benzoato de sódio	Tratamento da deficiência de ornitina-transcarbamilase
Romanian	Benzoat de sodiu	Tratamentul deficitului de ornitin- transcarbamilază
Slovak	Benzoan sodný	Liečba nedostatku transkarbamylázy ornitínu
Slovenian	Natrijev benzoat	Zdravljenje pomanjkanja ornitin-transkarbamilaze
Spanish	Benzoato de sodio	Tratamiento de la deficiencia de ornitina transcarbamilasa
Swedish	Natriumbenzoat	Behandling av brist på ornitrintranskarbamylas
Norwegian	Natriumbenzoat	Behandling av ornitrintranskarbamylase-mangel
Icelandic	Natríumbenzóat	Meðferð við skorti á ornitín transkarbamýlasa

¹ At the time of designation