17 November 2011
EMA/COMP/616497/2008 Rev.2
Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products

Public summary of opinion on orphan designation

α-Galactosidase A for the treatment of Fabry disease

Please note that this product was withdrawn from the Community Register of designated orphan medicinal products in August 2011 at the end of the period of market exclusivity.

On 8 August 2000, orphan designation (EU/3/00/003) was granted by the European Commission to Genzyme BV, The Netherlands, for α-Galactosidase A for the treatment of Fabry disease.

Genzyme BV changed name to Genzyme Europe BV in 2002.

What is Fabry disease?

Fabry disease comprises a group of inherited lysosomal storage disorders. Lysosomes are small vesicles within cells containing enzymes that are able to destroy or transform different substances of the cell, such as proteins, fat, nucleic acids (components of the genetic material) and sugars. Any change of the lysosomal enzymes causes abnormal accumulation of the substance (also known as substrate) normally transformed by it. Cells are unable to destroy or eliminate accumulated substrates, and high levels of them can be toxic leading to damage and malfunction of the organ where accumulation occurs. In Fabry disease, the activity of the lysosomal enzyme α-galactosidase A is impaired or absent. Fabry disease is a heterogenous disorder with variable onset of symptoms that affect several organs. Glycosphingolipids (biological molecules composed of a type of sugar and lipid) is the substrate that accumulates in Fabry disease, and severity of the disease depends on the level of accumulation. Fabry disease affects the nervous system, kidneys, heart, skin and gastrointestinal system. Some of the most common pathological symptoms are skin lesions and burning pain of the extremities. This pain can become very intense, especially when one has a fever. Fabry disease is chronically debilitating and life threatening.

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

At the time of designation, Fabry disease affected not more than 0.027 in 10,000 people in the European Union (EU)*. This is equivalent to a total of not more than 1,000 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 submission of application for orphan drug designation, there were no satisfactory methods authorised for the treatment of Fabry disease. Some patients with advanced renal failure due to the disease could be treated with dialysis and/or renal transplantation and treatments for specific symptoms, such as convulsions, were used.

How is this medicine expected to work?

The product works as an enzyme replacement therapy. It is expected to replace the missing or defective alpha-galactosidase in patients with Fabry disease, reducing the accumulation of glycosphingolipids. This is expected to relieve the symptoms.

What is the stage of development of this medicine?

The effects of α -Galactosidase A have been evaluated in experimental models.

At the time of submission of the application for orphan designation, clinical trials in patients with Fabry disease were ongoing.

At the time of submission, α -Galactosidase was not authorised anywhere in the world for Fabry disease. Orphan designation of α -Galactosidase A had been granted in United States for use in the treatment of Fabry disease. Orphan designation had also been granted in Japan.

In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 141/2000 of 16 December 1999, the COMP adopted a positive opinion on 11 July 2000 recommending the granting of this designation.

Update: α -Galactosidase A (Fabrazyme) has been authorised in the EU since 3 August 2001 for use as long-term enzyme replacement therapy in patients with a confirmed diagnosis of Fabry disease (α-galactosidase A deficiency).

More information on Fabrazyme can be found in the European public assessment report (EPAR) on the Agency's website: ema.europa.eu/Find medicine/Human medicines/European Public Assessment Reports

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

- the seriousness of the condition;

*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 377,000,000 (Eurostat 2001) and may differ from the true number of patients affected by 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:

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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 languages[1], Norwegian and Icelandic

Language	Active Ingredient	Indication
English	α-Galactosidase A	Treatment of Fabry Disease
Danish	α-galactosidase A	Behandling af Fabrys sygdom
Dutch	α-Galactosidase A	Behandeling van de ziekte van Fabry
Finnish	α-Galaktosidaasi A	Fabry-sairauden hoitoon
French	α-Galactosidase A	Traitement de la maladie de Fabry
German	α-Galactosidase A	Behandlung des Fabry-Syndroms
Greek	Α-γαλακτοζιδάση	Αγωγή κατά του συνδρόμου του Fabry
Italian	α-Galattosidase A	Trattamento della malattia di Fabry
Potuguese	α-Galactosidase A	Tratamento da doença de Fabry
Spanish	α-Galactosidasa A	Tratamiento de la enfermedad de Fabry
Swedish	α-Galaktosidas A	behandling av Fabrys sjukdom

[1] At the time of designation