2 August 2019
EMADOC-628903358-935

Public summary of opinion on orphan designation

Relacorilant for the treatment of Cushing's syndrome

On 29 May 2019, orphan designation (EU/3/19/2164) was granted by the European Commission to Granzer Regulatory Consulting & Services, Germany, for relacorilant for the treatment of Cushing's syndrome.

What is Cushing's syndrome?

Cushing's syndrome is a disease characterised by an excess of the hormone cortisol in the blood. It is usually caused by a tumour of the pituitary gland (a gland located at the base of the brain) that produces large amounts of adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH), which in turn stimulates the production of excess cortisol from the adrenal glands, which are situated above the kidney. Some patients with the syndrome have other kinds of tumours that produce ACTH, or tumours that produce excess cortisol directly.

Symptoms of Cushing's syndrome include weight gain affecting the face and torso but not the limbs, growth of fat above the collar bone and the back of the neck, a roundish face, easy bruising, excessive growth of coarse hair on the face, weakening of the muscles and bones, depression, diabetes and high blood pressure.

Cushing's syndrome is a severe disease that is long lasting and may be life threatening because of its complications, including diabetes, high blood pressure and mental problems.

What is the estimated number of patients affected by Cushing's syndrome?

At the time of designation, Cushing's syndrome affected approximately 0.6 in 10,000 people in the European Union (EU). This was equivalent to a total of around 31,000 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).

[*]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 518,400,000 (Eurostat 2019).

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What treatments are available?

At the time of designation, the main treatment for ACTH-dependent Cushing's syndrome involved surgery to remove the tumour responsible for causing the high cortisol levels, sometimes followed by radiotherapy (treatment with radiation). The medicines Ketoconazole HRA and Signifor (pasireotide) were also authorised in the EU to treat the condition. Other medicines were authorised in EU countries to reduce the production of cortisol, including aminoglutethimide, metyrapone and mitotane.

The sponsor has provided sufficient information to show that relacorilant might be of significant benefit for patients with Cushing syndrome. In patients whose condition has not responded well to current treatments, early results show that the medicine can help to control blood pressure and blood sugar levels, which indicate a reduction in cortisol activity. 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?

The excess cortisol in patients with Cushing's syndrome exerts its effects by attaching to a receptor (target) known as the glucocorticoid receptor. Relacorilant also attaches to this receptor, reducing cortisol's ability to do so, which relieves the symptoms of Cushing's syndrome.

What is the stage of development of this medicine?

The effects of relacorilant have been evaluated in experimental models.

At the time of submission of the application for orphan designation, clinical trials with relacorilant in patients with Cushing's syndrome were ongoing.

At the time of submission, relacorilant was not authorised anywhere in the EU for the treatment of Cushing's syndrome. Orphan designation of relacorilant had been granted in the United States for the treatment of endogenous Cushing's syndrome.

In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 141/2000, the COMP adopted a positive opinion on 17 April 2019, 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 languages[1], Norwegian and Icelandic

Language	Active ingredient	Indication
English	Relacorilant	Treatment of Cushing's syndrome
Bulgarian	Релакорилант	Лечение на синдром на Кушинг
Croatian	relakorilant	Liječenje Cushingovog sindroma
Czech	Relacorilant	Léčba Cushingova syndromu
Danish	Relacorilant	Behandling af Cushings syndrom
Dutch	Relacorilant	Behandeling van Cushing syndroom
Estonian	Relakorilant	Cushingi sündroomi ravi
Finnish	Relakorilantti	Cushingin oireyhtymän hoito
French	Relacorilant	Traitement du syndrome de Cushing
German	Relacorilant	Behandlung des Cushing-Syndroms
Greek	Ρελακοριλάντη	Θεραπεία του συνδρόμου Cushing
Hungarian	Relakorilant	A Cushing-szindróma kezelése
Italian	Relacorilant	Trattamento della sindrome di Cushing
Latvian	Relakorilants	Kušinga sindroma ārstēšana
Lithuanian	Relakorilantas	Kušingo (Cushing) sindromo gydymas
Maltese	Relakorilant	Kura tas-sindromu ta' Cushing
Polish	Relakorylant	Leczenie zespołu Cushinga
Portuguese	Relacorilant	Tratamento da síndrome de Cushing
Romanian	Relacorilant	Tratamentul sindromului Cushing
Slovak	Relakorilant	Liečba Cushingovho syndrómu
Slovenian	Relakorilant	Zdravljenje Cushingovega sindroma
Spanish	Relacorilant	Tratamiento del síndrome de Cushing
Swedish	Relakorilant	Behandling av Cushings syndrom
Norwegian	Relakorilant	Behandling av Cushings syndrom
Icelandic	Relakorílant	Meðferð við Cushingsheilkenni

[1] At the time of designation