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EMA/683957/2016
Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products

Public summary of opinion on orphan designation

Sodium benzoate for the treatment of argininosuccinic aciduria

On 18 November 2016, orphan designation (EU/3/16/1787) was granted by the European Commission to Lucane Pharma SA, France, for sodium benzoate for the treatment of argininosuccinic aciduria.

What is argininosuccinic aciduria?

Argininosuccinic aciduria is one of the inherited disorders known as 'urea-cycle disorders', which cause ammonia to accumulate in the blood. Patients with argininosuccinic aciduria lack argininosuccinate lyase, one of the liver enzymes needed to get rid of excess nitrogen. In the absence of this liver 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 usually appear in the first few days of life and include lethargy (lack of energy), vomiting, loss of appetite, seizures (fits) and coma.

Argininosuccinic aciduria is a long-term debilitating and life-threatening disease that leads to developmental delay and mental disability and is associated with a high mortality rate.

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

At the time of designation, argininosuccinic aciduria 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, Ravicti (glycerol phenylbutyrate) was authorised in the EU for the treatment of urea cycle disorders including argininosuccinic aciduria. Patients were also advised to control their dietary intake of proteins, which are rich in nitrogen, to reduce the amount of ammonia formed in the body.

*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).

The sponsor has provided sufficient information to show that sodium benzoate might be of significant benefit for patients with argininosuccinic aciduria because this medicine could potentially be used together with the currently authorised product. 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 argininosuccinic aciduria 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 argininosuccinic aciduria 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 6 October 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 argininosuccinic aciduria
Bulgarian	Натриев бензоат	Лечение на аргининосукцининова ацидурия
Croatian	Natrijev benzoat	Liječenje argininosukcinske acidurije
Czech	Benzoát sodný	Léčba argininosukcinátové acidurie
Danish	Natriumbenzoat	Behandling af argininravsyreuri
Dutch	Natriumbenzoat	Behandeling van argininosuccinic aciduria
Estonian	Naatriumbensoaat	Argininosuktsiin-atsiduuria ravi
Finnish	Natriumbentsoatti	Argininosukkinaattiasidurian hoito
French	Benzoate de sodium	Traitement de l'acidurie argininosuccinique
German	Natriumbenzoat	Behandlung einer Argininosukzinoazidurie
Greek	Βενζοϊκό νάτριο	Θεραπεία της αργινοηλεκτρικής οξυουρίας.
Hungarian	Nátrium benzoát	Argininoszukcinin anuria kezelésére
Italian	Benzoato di sodio	Trattamento dell'aciduria argininosuccinica
Latvian	Nātrija benzoāts	Arginīna sukcināta acidūrijas ārstēšana
Lithuanian	Natrio benzoatas	Arginino sukcininės acidurijos gydymas
Maltese	Sodium benzoate	Kura tal-aċidurja arġininosuċċinika
Polish	Benzoesan sodu	Leczenie acydurii argininobursztynianowej
Portuguese	Benzoato de sódio	Tratamento da acidúria argininosuccínica
Romanian	Benzoat de sodiu	Tratamentul aciduriei argininosuccinice
Slovak	Benzoan sodný	Liečba arginínosukcinátovej acidúrie
Slovenian	Natrijev benzoat	Zdravljenje argininsukcinilne acidurije
Spanish	Benzoato de sodio	Tratamiento de la aciduria argininsuccínica
Swedish	Natriumbenzoat	Behandling av argininbärnstensaciduri
Norwegian	Natriumbenzoat	Behandling av argininravsyreaciduri
Icelandic	Natríumbenzóat	Meðferð á argínínósúksíníksýrumigu

¹ At the time of designation