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Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products

Public summary of opinion on orphan designation

Zinc gluconate for treatment of facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy

On 18 November 2016, orphan designation (EU/3/16/1793) was granted by the European Commission to Université de Montpellier, France, for zinc gluconate for treatment of facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy.

What is facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy?

Facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy is an inherited condition that causes weakness and wasting of the muscles, usually starting with the muscles of the face, shoulders and arms and gradually extending to the muscles of the torso and lower limbs. Symptoms usually start in adulthood but there is also a more severe form of the disease that starts in childhood (infantile onset).

The condition is long-term debilitating to the progressive muscle weakness and resulting difficulty moving around. There may also be problems with vision and hearing, and the infantile onset form is considered life threatening.

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

At the time of designation, facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy affected less than 1 in 10,000 people in the European Union (EU). This was equivalent to a total of fewer than 51,000 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, no satisfactory method were authorised in the EU to treat facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy. Patients mainly received supportive treatment including physical therapies such as physiotherapy and medicines to manage muscle pain and inflammation.

*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).

30 Churchill Place ● Canary Wharf ● London E14 5EU ● United Kingdom
Telephone +44 (0)20 3660 6000 **Facsimile** +44 (0)20 3660 5555
Send a question via our website www.ema.europa.eu/contact

How is this medicine expected to work?

Muscle weakness in patients with facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy is believed to be linked to a chemical reaction known as oxidation. This medicine contains the mineral zinc, which is expected to assist certain enzymes that stop or neutralise these harmful reactions, and thereby improve or delay patients' symptoms.

Zinc gluconate is being developed for use in combination with 3 other medicines with orphan designation: alpha-tocopherol (a form of vitamin E), ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and L-selenomethionine.

What is the stage of development of this medicine?

The effects of the medicine have been evaluated in experimental models.

At the time of submission of the application for orphan designation, clinical trials with the medicine in patients with facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy were ongoing.

At the time of submission, the medicine was not authorised anywhere in the EU for facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy 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.

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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	Zinc gluconate	Treatment of facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy
Bulgarian	Цинков глюконат	Лечение на фацио-скапуло-хумерална мускулна дистрофия
Croatian	Cink glukonat	Liječenje fascioskapulohumeralne mišićne distrofije
Czech	Glukonan zinečnatý	Léčba facioskapulohumerální svalové dystrofie
Danish	Zinkgluconat	Behandling af facioscapulohumeral muskeldystrofi
Dutch	Zinkgluconaat	Behandeling van facioscapulohumerale spierdystrofie
Estonian	Tsink glükonaat	Fatsioskapulohumeraalse lihasdüstroofia ravi
Finnish	Sinkkiglukonaatti	Fasioskapulohumeraalisen lihasdystrofian hoito
French	Gluconate de zinc	Traitement de la dystrophie musculaire facio-scapulo-humérale
German	Zinkgluconat	Behandlung der fazioskapulohumeralen Muskeldystrophie
Greek	Γλυκονικός ψευδάργυρο	Θεραπεία της προσωποωμοβραχιόνιας μυϊκής δυστροφίας
Hungarian	Cink-glükonát	Fascioscapulohumeralis izomdisztrófia kezelése
Italian	Gluconato di zinco	Trattamento della distrofia muscolare facio-scapolo-omerale
Latvian	Cinka glikonāts	Facioskapulohumerālās muskuļu distrofijas ārstēšana
Lithuanian	Cinko gliukonatas	Veido-mentės-žasto raumenų distrofijos gydymas
Maltese	Glukonat taż-żingu	Kura ta' distrofija muskolari faċjo-skapulo-umerali
Polish	Glukonian cynku	Leczenie dystrofii mięśniowej twarzowo-łopatkowo-ramieniowej
Portuguese	Gluconato de zinco	Tratamento da distrofia muscular facioescapuloumeral
Romanian	Gluconat de zinc	Tratamentul distrofiei musculare facio-scapulo-humerale
Slovak	Glukónan zinočnatý	Liečba facioskapulohumerálnej svalovej dystrofie
Slovenian	Cinkov glukonat	Zdravljenje facioskapulohumeralne mišične distrofije
Spanish	Gluconato de zinc	Tratamiento de la distrofia muscular facioescapulohumeral
Swedish	Zinkglukonat	Behandling av facioskapulohumeral muskeldystrofi
Norwegian	Sinkglukonat	Behandling av facioscapulohumeral muskel dystrofi
Icelandic	ink glúkónat	Meðferð á facioscapulohumeral-vöðvarýrnun

[1] At the time of designation