6 May 2020
EMADOC-628903358-1830

# Public summary of opinion on orphan designation

Ziritaxestat for the treatment of systemic sclerosis

On 9 January 2020, orphan designation EU/3/19/2244 was granted by the European Commission to Galapagos N.V., Belgium, for ziritaxestat for the treatment of systemic sclerosis.

## What is systemic sclerosis?

Systemic sclerosis, also known as scleroderma, is a complex disease in which the immune system (the body's natural defences) is overactive, causing inflammation and excessive production of some proteins, particularly collagen.

Collagen is an important component of connective tissue (the tissue that supports the skin and internal organs). Overproduction leads to abnormal growth of connective tissue, causing the skin to become thick and hard. Initial symptoms include swelling of fingers and hands, followed by a thickening of the skin over the arms, legs, face and trunk. The disease can also damage the walls of blood vessels of internal organs such as the heart, lungs and kidneys. This makes it more difficult for the blood to flow, causing tissue damage and circulation problems.

Systemic sclerosis is a long-lasting, debilitating disease and can be life threatening because of its possible effects on the gut, heart, lungs and kidneys.

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

At the time of designation, systemic sclerosis affected less than 3.5 in 10,000 people in the European Union (EU). This was equivalent to a total of fewer than 181,000 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, there were no treatments for systemic sclerosis that could stop the build-up of collagen and abnormal growth of connective tissue. Treatments authorised in the EU were aimed at relieving the symptoms of the disease and limiting the damage it causes. Several medicines were used

*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).

**Official address** Domenico Scarlattilaan 6 ● 1083 HS Amsterdam ● The Netherlands
**Address for visits and deliveries** Refer to www.ema.europa.eu/how-to-find-us
**Send us a question** Go to www.ema.europa.eu/contact **Telephone** +31 (0)88 781 6000 An agency of the European Union

to reduce inflammation and circulation problems. Bosentan was authorised in the EU to treat patients with systemic sclerosis in whom poor blood circulation caused by the disease has led to the development of digital ulcers (sores on the fingers and toes) and patients with pulmonary arterial hypertension secondary to systemic sclerosis.

The sponsor has provided sufficient information to show that the medicine might be of significant benefit for patients with systemic sclerosis. This is because laboratory studies suggest that the medicine can reduce the thickening of the skin and build-up of collagen in the lungs, symptoms that are not treated with current therapies.

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 medicine works by blocking the action of an enzyme called autotaxin, which is involved in the production of a substance called lysophosphatidic acid (LPA). LPA is involved in the abnormal formation of connective tissue in systemic sclerosis. By blocking its production, the medicine is expected to reduce the formation of connective tissue in the skin and various organs, thereby relieving the symptoms of the disease.

## What is the stage of development of this medicine?

The effects of ziritaxestat have been evaluated in experimental models.

At the time of submission of the application for orphan designation, clinical trials with ziritaxestat in patients with systemic sclerosis were ongoing.

At the time of submission, ziritaxestat was not authorised anywhere in the EU for the treatment of systemic sclerosis or designated as an orphan medicinal product elsewhere for this condition.

In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 141/2000, the COMP adopted a positive opinion on 5 December 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.

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 | Ziritaxestat | Treatment of systemic sclerosis |
| Bulgarian | Зиритаксестат | Лечение на системна склероза |
| Croatian | Ziritaksestat | Liječenje sistemske skleroze |
| Czech | Ziritaxestat | Léčba systémové sklerodermie |
| Danish | Ziritaxestat | Behandling af systemisk sklerose |
| Dutch | Ziritaxestat | Behandeling van systeem sclerose |
| Estonian | Ziritaksestaat | Süsteemse sklerodermia ravi |
| Finnish | Ziritaksestaatti | Systeemisen skleroosin hoito |
| French | Ziritaxestat | Traitement de la sclérose systémique |
| German | Ziritaxestat | Behandlung der systemischen Sklerose |
| Greek | Ζιριταξεστάτη | Θεραπεία της συστηματικής σκλήρυνσης |
| Hungarian | Ziritaxesztat | Szisztémás scleroderma kezelése |
| Italian | Ziritaxestat | Trattamento della sclerosi sistemica |
| Latvian | Ziritaksestats | Sistēmiskas sklerozes ārstēšana |
| Lithuanian | Ziritaksestatas | Sisteminės sklerozės gydymas |
| Maltese | Żiritaksestat | Kura tas-sklerosi sistemika |
| Polish | Ziritaksestat | Leczenie twardziny narządowej |
| Portuguese | Ziritaxestat | Tratamento da esclerose sistémica |
| Romanian | Ziritaxestat | Tratamentul sclerozei sistemice |
| Slovak | Ziritaxestat | Liečba systémovej sklerózy |
| Slovenian | Ziritaksestat | Zdravljenje sistemske skleroze |
| Spanish | Ziritaxestat | Tratamiento de la esclerosis sistémica |
| Swedish | Ziritaxestat | Behandling av systemisk skleros |
| Norwegian | Ziritaksestat | Behandling av systemisk sklerose |
| Icelandic | Ziritaxestat | Meðferð við dreifðum herslismeinum |

[1] At the time of designation