

Study finds arthritis drug significantly effective in treating Crohn's disease

November 17 2016

Researchers at University of California San Diego School of Medicine have shown that ustekinumab, a human antibody used to treat arthritis, significantly induces response and remission in patients with moderate to severe Crohn's disease. Results of the clinical trial will appear in the November 16 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

"A high percentage of the [patients](#) in the study who had not responded to conventional therapies were in clinical remission after only a single dose of intravenous ustekinumab," said William J. Sandborn, MD, professor of medicine at UC San Diego School of Medicine and director of the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center at UC San Diego Health. "Finding effective new treatment options for this patient population is critical because Crohn's disease can dramatically impact a person's quality of life. Patients suffering from this disease may go to the bathroom up to 20 times a day and experience abdominal pain, ulcers and a reduced appetite."

Crohn's disease is a [chronic inflammatory disease](#) of the gastrointestinal tract that affects approximately 700,000 people in the United States. It can affect any part of the GI tract but it is more commonly found at the end of the small intestine (the ileum) where it joins the beginning of the large intestine (or colon). Crohn's disease is usually treated with glucocorticoids, immunosuppressants, [tumor necrosis factor](#) (TNF) antagonists or integrin inhibitors.

"The drawbacks of these therapies include an increased risk of infection

and cancer, and limited efficacy," said Sandborn. "Ustekinumab has not been associated with an increased risk of serious adverse events."

The rates of remission response in the randomized study at week six among patients receiving intravenous ustekinumab at a dose of either 130 mg or approximately 6 mg per kilogram were significantly higher than the rates among patients receiving a placebo. The study also found subcutaneous (injected) ustekinumab every 8 to 12 weeks maintained remission in patients.

"This study indicates that ustekinumab may have a long duration of action, a likelihood that may become better understood in future trials," said Sandborn. "Our current findings offer hope for those suffering from this debilitating [gastrointestinal tract disease](#)."

More information: Brian G. Feagan et al, Ustekinumab as Induction and Maintenance Therapy for Crohn's Disease, *New England Journal of Medicine* (2016). [DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1602773](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa1602773)

Provided by University of California - San Diego

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