Promising new treatment option for chronic plaque psoriasis

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Affecting more than 6 million Americans, chronic plaque psoriasis manifests as patches of red, scaly skin most frequently on the scalp, elbows and knees. Chronic plaque psoriasis most often appears in adolescence or mid-life and can require lifelong medication. Until the 1990s, physicians had few options to offer their patients with moderate-to-severe psoriasis. Up to a quarter of patients with psoriasis suffer from these more aggressive cases that can affect anywhere from 10 to 100 percent of the surface of the skin.

Now, two Phase 3 trials have demonstrated that a biologic agent called tildrakizumab is efficacious and well-tolerated in patients with moderate-to-severe chronic plaque psoriasis. The findings appeared today in the journal *Lancet* and represent a major step forward in the treatment of the skin disorder.

"We have made a huge amount of progress in the treatment of moderate to severe psoriasis over the past 15 years," said the paper's lead author, Alexa B. Kimball, MD, President and CEO of Harvard Medical Faculty Physicians (HMFP) at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) and a Professor of Dermatology at Harvard Medical School. "In these two trials, we tested whether this new, very targeted approach to a selected part of the inflammatory pathway would be effective in treating psoriasis, and it was - dramatically so."

An antibody that targets only a very specific pathway, tildrakizumab belongs to a class of treatments called biologic agents, or biologics for short. Different from traditional pharmaceutical drugs, biologics are based on molecules that the body makes naturally - like antibodies - to inhibit interleukins and manage psoriasis.

The first generation of biologics to hit the market about 15 years ago led to improved clinical outcomes in the treatment of psoriasis. But, because the interleukins in question are involved in so many biological processes, inhibiting them to manage psoriasis can cause serious side effects in some patients, including infections or other unusual immune system dysfunctions.
Through a combination of basic research, clinical observation and epidemiology, Kimball and colleagues identified another interleukin more specifically relevant to psoriasis. Targeting the more relevant interleukin may lead to fewer unwanted side effects. Their findings that tildrakizumab can successfully treat psoriasis by inhibiting this recently discovered interleukin represents a major step forward in the treatment of this potentially debilitating condition.

Provided by Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center


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