

Famciclovir: Confirmed Efficacy of 250mg t.i.d for the Treatment of Herpes Zoster (HZ) Infection. M. Candaele, MD and D. Candaele, MD, Gent, Belgium on behalf of the Famciclovir Herpes Zoster Clinical Study Group.

Famciclovir (FCV) is the well-absorbed oral form of penciclovir (PCV), a potent and selective antiherpes agent active against HSV and VZV in vitro. The excellent bioavailability of PCV following administration of FCV (77%) and the prolonged intracellular half-life of PCV-triphosphate (7hrs) in VZV infected MRC-5 cells indicated that FCV would be as effective as acyclovir (ACV) in the treatment of herpes zoster but at a lower dose and reduced dose frequency. FCV dosed at 250mg, 500mg or 750mg three times daily for seven days was shown in a well-controlled clinical trial to be at least as effective as 800mg ACV five times daily for seven days in the treatment of patients with uncomplicated herpes zoster. To confirm these data, a second trial in patients with uncomplicated herpes zoster was conducted to compare the efficacy and safety of 250mg FCV t.i.d for seven days with 800mg ACV five times daily for seven days. 253 immunocompetent adult patients whose rash had been present for no more than 72 hours were enrolled into this double-blind, randomised study. Efficacy of the two treatments was comparable in terms of cutaneous lesion resolution (loss of vesicles, full crusting, loss of crusts) and loss of pain during the acute infection. Safety was assessed by haematology, clinical chemistry and adverse event reporting and, again, both treatments were comparable. This is the second clinical study demonstrating that 250mg FCV taken three times daily is at least as effective as 800mg ACV five times daily in the treatment of patients with uncomplicated herpes zoster. The conclusion drawn previously that FCV has a beneficial dosing regimen and promises to set a new standard in the treatment of herpes zoster infection is supported by the results from this study.

Famciclovir in the Treatment of Herpes Zoster (HZ) Infection. J. Portnoy, MD, Jewish General Hospital, Montreal, Quebec, Canada on behalf of the Famciclovir Herpes Zoster Clinical Study Group.

Famciclovir (FCV) is the well-absorbed oral form of penciclovir (PCV), a 9-hydroxyalkyl-guanine with potent and selective activity against HSV and VZV in vitro. The excellent bioavailability of PCV following administration of FCV (77%) and the prolonged intracellular half-life of PCV-triphosphate (7hrs) in VZV infected MRC-5 cells indicate that FCV should be as effective as acyclovir (ACV) in the treatment of herpes zoster but with the advantage of a lower dose and reduced dose frequency. 545 immunocompetent adult patients with uncomplicated herpes zoster were enrolled within 72 hours of rash onset into this double-blind, randomised study. Patients received either 250mg, 500mg or 750mg FCV t.i.d. or 800mg ACV five times daily for seven days. The rate at which loss of vesicles, full crusting, loss of crusts and loss of pain occurred was estimated using the Cox Proportional Hazards Model. Safety was assessed by haematology, clinical chemistry and adverse event reporting. The rates at which cutaneous lesions resolved in the FCV treatment groups were similar to each other and to ACV. Similarly, pain resolution occurred at similar rates in all treatment groups. No statistically significant differences were seen between treatment groups in the intention-to-treat analysis. Overall, the safety profiles of the four treatment groups was comparable. This clinical study confirms the pre-clinical prediction that FCV can be used at a lower dose and reduced dose frequency compared with ACV and shows that 250mg FCV taken three times daily is at least as effective as 800mg ACV five times daily in the treatment of patients with uncomplicated herpes zoster. In conclusion, FCV has a beneficial dosing regimen and promises to set a new standard in the treatment of herpes zoster infection.