Valtrex* (Valaciclovir, VACV) for the Treatment of Recurrent Genital Herpes. S Safrin, San Francisco General Hospital, California, USA for the International Valaciclovir HSV Study Group.

VACV, the L-valyl ester of Zovirax* (acyclovir, ACV), has been evaluated for the acute treatment of recurrent genital herpes in three randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trials. Immunocompetent patients with a history of recurrent genital herpes were randomized to VACV (1000 mg or 500 mg) twice daily, ACV 200 mg five times daily or placebo (PCB). Treatment was initiated by the patients within 24 hours of a prodrome or first signs or symptoms of a recurrence and continued for 5 days. Data were analysed by intent-to-treat for all patients randomized and returning for clinic assessment. Both VACV regimens significantly ($P<0.0001$) accelerated resolution of all signs and symptoms, thus shortening episode length. Hazard ratios (95% CIs) for episode resolution were:

	Study 1 (n=1171)	Study 2 (n=977)	Study 3 (n=710)
VACV 1000 versus PCB	1.66 (1.38, 2.01)	1.86 (1.56, 2.21)	-
VACV 500 versus PCB	-	1.94 (1.64, 2.31)	-
VACV 1000 versus ACV	0.98 (0.85, 1.12)	-	-
VACV 500 versus ACV	-	-	0.93 (0.79, 1.08)

Lesions aborted or failed to develop beyond the papule stage in ~30% more patients treated with VACV than PCB. Proportions of patients in whom lesions were prevented were:

	VACV 1000	VACV 500	ACV	PCB
Study 1 (%)	25.9	-	24.8	19.8
Study 2 (%)	28.0	31.3	-	21.2

Relative risks for VACV 1000 mg versus PCB were 1.31 (0.95, 1.79) and 1.34 (1.01, 1.78) for Studies 1 and 2, respectively, and 1.50 (1.13, 1.94) for VACV 500 mg. In those patients in whom lesions did progress, VACV treatment significantly hastened healing ($P<0.0001$) compared with PCB. Adverse events were rare, generally mild and similar in type across all treatment groups. In the treatment of recurrent genital herpes twice-daily VACV substantially speeds resolution of all signs and symptoms and increases by about one-third the number of patients in whom lesions were prevented while retaining the safety profile of ACV.