

Esomeprazole

A Viewpoint by Tore Lind

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Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) are widely used in the treatment of acid-related disorders. Esomeprazole is the *S*-isomer of omeprazole and the first PPI developed as an optical single isomer.

The first data from the programme with esomeprazole have recently been reported. These showed that the pharmacodynamic response to esomeprazole is dose-dependent. Esomeprazole in doses of 20 or 40mg has, compared with recommended doses of other PPIs, achieved greater and more sustained acid reduction. Interpatient variability in area under the plasma concentration-time curve and hence intragastric pH is lower with esomeprazole than omeprazole. These findings with esomeprazole may increase the predictability of response and improve treatment outcome.

Esomeprazole has been shown to be as effective as omeprazole in PPI-based triple therapy for eradication of *Helicobacter pylori* infection. One week of eradication therapy with esomeprazole is sufficient in the treatment of active duodenal ulcer. In

contrast, although the clinical results with conventional PPIs are good, a substantial proportion of patients with reflux will remain unhealed after treatment for 8 weeks.

In reflux disease, esomeprazole is the first new PPI that has shown to be superior to omeprazole. Furthermore, long term treatment with esomeprazole was effective in preventing both endoscopic and, when taken 'on demand', symptomatic relapse. During 'on demand' therapy, 1 tablet every third day was adequate. The safety profile of esomeprazole seems to be similar to that reported for omeprazole.

In initial studies, esomeprazole was superior to omeprazole in clinical response, although the optimal dosing of esomeprazole has yet to be documented. A shorter course of treatment as well as a reduced need for continuous daily dosing may indicate esomeprazole to be cost-effective. In addition, the time-to-effect in symptom-driven reflux medication has been reported to be important from a patient perspective. Thus, further comparative studies will determine the place of esomeprazole in the therapeutic arsenal in acid related disorders. ▲