

Rosiglitazone/Metformin **A Viewpoint by Giulio Marchesini**

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Intensive treatment to maintain blood glucose within near-normal values is mandatory to prevent complications in diabetes mellitus. In type 2 patients, where insulin resistance is the main metabolic defect, drugs able to increase insulin sensitivity are also expected to slow down the progressive failure of β -cell secretion which accompanies long-lasting disease. Rosiglitazone and metformin are insulin-sensitising drugs acting at different levels through non-competitive mechanisms, and combination therapy is approved in both the US and the EU. Adverse effects of glitazones are different from those experienced with metformin, and there are no contraindications to combined therapy, with the notable exception of renal failure. Also, the risk of hypoglycaemia is low, and definitely lower than that observed with the combination of metformin and sulfonylurea drugs. Metformin might also prevent

the modest increase in bodyweight observed with rosiglitazone.

What does a fixed-dose combination pill add to the separate use of the two components? Apparently nothing under the pharmacological profile, but the poly-pill might favour compliance and, indirectly, glucose control and the prevention of complications. Type 2 diabetes is part of the metabolic syndrome, and treatment frequently includes aspirin and multiple antihypertensive and hypolipidaemic agents in addition to oral glucose-lowering drugs, not to mention any other medications frequently prescribed to these mature subjects. In my experience, patients with over ten prescriptions per day are common. Compliance to treatment decreases linearly with the increasing number of prescriptions, and any effort to limit the number of pills is welcome. Bioequivalence between the combination tablet and the coadministration of the two separate components is proven and different formulations will allow physicians to adjust the daily dose according to patients' needs. Post-registration surveillance will demonstrate whether these potential advantages will be achieved. ▲