

Entecavir is superior to Lamivudine in the treatment of chronic hepatitis B, in association with Interferon

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The treatment of chronic hepatitis B has only limited efficacy. The current recommendations include the use of interferon alfa plus lamivudine, but the rate of complete response (i.e. PCR negative HBV DNA) is 30% to 40% (for HBeAg positive, and HBeAg negative chronic hepatitis B, respectively). Adefovir is another antiviral agent approved for the treatment of chronic hepatitis B, but its efficacy appears to be at best the one of lamivudine.

A new compound, called entecavir, has been evaluated in the treatment of chronic hepatitis B in two recently published studies. Both studies belong to the BEHoLD trial, and they have evaluated the efficacy of entecavir, compared with lamivudine, in patients with HBeAg positive chronic hepatitis B (HBeAg+, 715 patients) and in patients with HBeAg negative chronic hepatitis B (HBeAg-, 648 patients). The primary objective of this study was the improvement in the histologic score after 48 weeks of treatment.

In the case of HBeAg+ patients, the improvement of the hepatic lesions after 48 weeks was superior in the group treated with entecavir as compared with the group treated with lamivudine (72% vs 62%; $p = 0.009$). Complete remission of viremia (undetectable replication assessed by PCR HBV ADN) was also superior in the group treated with entecavir, as compared with lamivudine (67% vs 36%; $p = 0.001$). In HBeAg- patients the efficacy of entecavir as compared with lamivudine was as good as for the HBeAg+ patients: 70% vs. 61% in the rate of histological improvement ($p = 0.01$) and 90% vs 72% in the rate of complete remission ($p = 0.045$). Entecavir was not associated with the development of viral resistance in these two studies. The safety and tolerability profile was similar for entecavir and lamivudine.

In conclusion, entecavir is superior to lamivudine in the treatment of chronic hepatitis B in association with interferon, equally for HBeAg positive and HBeAg negative patients. □

A Comparison of Entecavir and Lamivudine for HBeAg-Positive Chronic Hepatitis B

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Entecavir versus Lamivudine for Patients with HBeAg-Negative Chronic Hepatitis B

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