EXTENDED REPORT

Combined chondroitin sulfate and glucosamine for painful knee osteoarthritis: a multicentre, randomised, double-blind, non-inferiority trial versus celecoxib

Marc C Hochberg,1 Johanne Martel-Pelletier,2 Jordi Monfort,3,4 Ingrid Möller,5 Juan Ramón Castillo,6 Nigel Arden,7,8,9 Francis Berenbaum,10 Francisco J Blanco,11 Philip G Conaghan,12 Gema Domènech,13 Yves Henrotin,14,15 Thomas Pap,16 Pascal Richette,17,18 Allen Sawitzke,19 Patrick du Souich,20 Jean-Pierre Pelletier,2 on behalf of the MOVES Investigation Group

ABSTRACT

Objectives To compare the efficacy and safety of chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine hydrochloride (CS+GH) versus celecoxib in patients with knee osteoarthritis and severe pain.

Methods Double-blind Multicentre Osteoarthritis intervention trial with SYSADOA (MOVES) conducted in France, Germany, Poland and Spain evaluating treatment with CS+GH versus celecoxib in 606 patients with Kellgren and Lawrence grades 2–3 knee osteoarthritis and moderate-to-severe pain (Western Ontario and McMaster osteoarthritis index (WOMAC) score ≥301; 0–500 scale). Patients were randomised to receive 400 mg CS plus 500 mg GH three times a day or 200 mg celecoxib every day for 6 months. The primary outcome was the mean decrease in WOMAC pain from baseline to 6 months. Secondary outcomes included WOMAC function and stiffness, visual analogue scale for pain, presence of joint swelling/effusion, rescue medication consumption, Outcome Measures in Rheumatology Clinical Trials and Osteoarthritis Research Society International (OMERACT-OARSI) criteria and EuroQol-5D.

Results The adjusted mean change (95% CI) in WOMAC pain was −185.7 (−200.3 to −171.1) (50.1% decrease) with CS+GH and −186.8 (−201.7 to −171.9) (50.2% decrease) with celecoxib, meeting the non-inferiority margin of −40: −1.11 (−22.0 to 19.8; p=0.92). All sensitivity analyses were consistent with that result. At 6 months, 79.7% of patients in the combination group and 79.2% in the celecoxib group fulfilled OMERACT-OARSI criteria. Both groups elicited a reduction >50% in the presence of joint swelling: a similar reduction was seen for effusion. No differences were observed for the other secondary outcomes. Adverse events were low and similarly distributed between groups.

Conclusions CS+GH has comparable efficacy to celecoxib in reducing pain, stiffness, functional limitation and joint swelling/effusion after 6 months in patients with painful knee osteoarthritis, with a good safety profile.

Trial registration number: NCT01425853.

INTRODUCTION

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis in Western populations. It most frequently affects the knee, causing joint pain, tenderness, limitations of movement and impairment of quality of life, resulting in a social and economic burden.1 It accounts for a substantial number of healthcare visits and costs in populations with access to medical care.2 With increasing life expectancy, osteoarthritis is anticipated to become the fourth leading cause of disability by the year 2020.1

Standard treatment focuses on symptom relief with analgesics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), though the latter can cause serious gastrointestinal and cardiovascular adverse effects, leading to concerns over long-term use.3,4

Various clinical trials have been performed with symptomatic slow-acting drugs for osteoarthritis (SYSADOA).5,6,9 Specifically, the Glucosamine/chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial (GAIT) was a randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled study comparing the efficacy and safety of glucosamine hydrochloride and chondroitin sulfate, alone and in combination, and celecoxib for the treatment of knee osteoarthritis.10 While no statistically significant effects were observed for the combination group in the overall study population, a significant difference was observed for the combination arm in patients with moderate-to-severe pain for the primary outcome, defined as a 20% decrease in Western Ontario and McMaster osteoarthritis index (WOMAC) pain score (p=0.002). Additionally, patients with moderate-to-severe pain showed significant differences in the combination versus placebo group for Outcome Measures in Rheumatology Clinical Trials and Osteoarthritis Research Society International (OMERACT-OARSI) response (p=0.001), 50% decrease in WOMAC pain (p=0.02), WOMAC pain score (p=0.009), WOMAC function score (p=0.008), normalised WOMAC score (p=0.017) and Health Assessment Questionnaire pain score (p=0.03).

To confirm these effects, the Multicentre Osteoarthritis interVention trial with SYSADOA (MOVES) was conducted to test whether
chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine hydrochloride has comparable efficacy to celecoxib after 6 months of treatment in patients with painful knee osteoarthritis.

METHODS

Study design

The MOVES trial was a phase IV, multicentre, non-inferiority, randomised, parallel-group, double-blind study. Patients were recruited consecutively by physicians in public or private practice at sites in France, Germany, Poland and Spain (see online supplementary table S1 for a list of investigators by study site and country).

Patients

Eligible patients were ≥40 years of age, with a diagnosis of primary knee osteoarthritis according to the American College of Rheumatology, with radiographic evidence (Kellgren and Lawrence grade 2 or 3) of osteoarthritis, and severe pain (WOMAC pain score ≥301 on a 0–500 scale) at inclusion. Patients were excluded if they had concurrent medical or arthritic conditions that could confound the evaluation of the index joint or coexisting disease that could preclude successful completion of the trial such as history of cardiovascular or gastrointestinal events and were excluded due to use of celecoxib. The full list of selection criteria is detailed in online supplementary table S2.

Treatment regimens and randomisation

Eligible subjects were randomised to 400 mg chondroitin sulfate plus 500 mg glucosamine hydrochloride (Drogrican, Bioiberica, S.A., Barcelona, Spain) three times a day or 200 mg celecoxib (Celebrex, Pfizer) every day for 6 months. Subjects were assigned sequentially in a 1:1 ratio using a computer-generated randomisation list prepared by an independent biostatistician (GD) using proc Plan SAS System (V9.1.3) software. Subjects receiving combination therapy took six capsules of chondroitin sulfate 200 mg plus glucosamine hydrochloride 250 mg per day; those receiving celecoxib took one celecoxib 200 mg plus one placebo capsule (in the morning) and four further placebo capsules per day. To maintain the blind (among patients, physicians, site staff and contract research organisation), celecoxib capsules were overencapsulated and placebo capsules had an identical appearance to the combination product. Patients were allowed to take up to 3 g/day of acetaminophen as rescue medication, except during the 48 h before clinical evaluation.

Outcome measures

The primary outcome measure was defined as the mean decrease in WOMAC pain subscale from baseline to 6 months. Secondary efficacy outcome measures included: stiffness and function subscales of WOMAC; visual analogue scale; OMERACT-OARSI responder index;12 presence of joint swelling/effusion (see online supplementary table S3 for protocols for assessment); use of rescue medication (according to diary entries and tablet counts); patients’ and investigators’ global assessments of disease activity and response to therapy, and health status (EuroQol-5D) at 6 months. All outcome measures were assessed at 30, 60, 120 and 180 days.

Safety outcomes included discontinuation of study treatment due to adverse events (AEs), changes in various laboratory measures and vital signs.

Statistical analysis

The sample size was calculated to test the non-inferiority of chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine hydrochloride versus celecoxib in the assessment of change in the WOMAC pain subscale. With 280 patients per group, the study would have 90% power assuming the expected difference in means was 0, the common SD was 26 (0–100 scale), according to previous studies, 12–16 with a delta of eight units (0–100 scale),15 16 17 a one-sided significance level of 2.5% and assuming a 20% dropout rate. A delta of eight units in a range from 0 to 100 (the same as a delta of 40 units in the original range from 0 to 500) was used in the study.

The main analyses were performed using the per-protocol population, defined as all randomised patients meeting the inclusion criteria, who received study medication, had a baseline and at least one post-baseline efficacy measurement (for the primary efficacy variable) and did not have major protocol violations. In non-inferiority trials, the per-protocol set is used in the primary analysis as it is the most conservative approach. Additionally, the primary efficacy analysis was performed according to intention to treat to test the robustness of the results. 18 19 The safety population was defined as all randomised subjects who took at least one dose of the study medication.

Continuous efficacy variables were analysed by means of a mixed models for repeated measurements (MMRM) approach, including time, treatment-by-time interaction and baseline value as a covariate. Sensitivity analyses were conducted using the baseline observation carried forward (BOCF) and the MMRM with no imputation.

The analysis was performed using SAS V9.2 software (SAS Institute, Cary, North Carolina, USA), and the level of significance was established at the 0.05 level (two-sided).

RESULTS

Patient characteristics

Recruitment began in September 2011 at 42 centres in France, Germany, Poland and Spain. The study was completed in April 2013. A total of 763 patients were screened and 606 underwent randomisation. At inclusion (figure 1). The main reasons for screen failure in 157 patients were high cardiovascular risk (n=36, 22.9%), patient decision (n=31, 19.8%) and low WOMAC pain score (n=23, 14.7%). Of the 606 subjects randomised, 568 (93.7%) were included in the intention-to-treat analysis and 522 (86.1%) in the per-protocol analysis. Of the 603 subjects included in the safety population, 465 (77.1%) completed the study, without differences between treatments (figure 1).

The mean±SD age at baseline was 62.7±8.9 years, 438 (83.9%) were women and 515 (98.7%) were Caucasian. The overall mean WOMAC pain score was 371.3±41.6, and Kellgren and Lawrence grade 2 changes were present in 327 (62.6%) of the subjects. The groups were well balanced at baseline (table 1).

Clinical outcomes

Efficacy

The primary and secondary efficacy outcomes are detailed in table 2 and figure 2.
The mean change from baseline to 6 months in WOMAC pain score was $-185.7$ ($-200.3$ to $-171.1$) (a decrease of $50.1\%$) in the chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine group and $-186.8$ ($-201.7$ to $-171.9$) (a decrease of $50.2\%$) in the celecoxib group (figure 2A). The corresponding mean difference (95% CI) respected the non-inferiority margin of $-40$ units: $-1.1$ ($-22.0$ to $19.8$; $p=0.92$) in the main analysis. All sensitivity analyses confirmed the non-inferiority conclusion (figure 3 and online supplementary table S4). There were no differences at 6 months between treatment groups in the WOMAC stiffness score, with a decrease of $46.9\%$ in the combination group and $-18.6$ ($-20.7$ to $-17.9$) (a decrease of $50.2\%$) in the celecoxib group (figure 2A). The corresponding mean difference (95% CI) respected the non-inferiority margin of $-40$ units: $5.9$ ($-1.9$ to $13.7$; $p=0.15$) in the main analysis. All sensitivity analyses confirmed the non-inferiority conclusion (figure 3 and online supplementary table S4). There were no differences at 6 months between treatment groups in the WOMAC function score, with a decrease of $45.5\%$ in the combination group compared with a decrease of $46.4\%$ in the celecoxib group (figure 2A). The corresponding mean difference (95% CI) respected the non-inferiority margin of $-40$ units: $1.1$ ($-21.8$ to $24.0$; $p=0.87$) in the main analysis. All sensitivity analyses confirmed the non-inferiority conclusion (figure 3 and online supplementary table S4). There were no differences at 6 months between treatment groups in the WOMAC visual analogue scale, with a decrease of $48.0\%$ in the combination group compared with a decrease of $48.8\%$ in the celecoxib group (figure 2A). The corresponding mean difference (95% CI) respected the non-inferiority margin of $-40$ units: $0.8$ ($-23.2$ to $24.8$; $p=0.86$) in the main analysis. All sensitivity analyses confirmed the non-inferiority conclusion (figure 3 and online supplementary table S4). There were no differences at 6 months between treatment groups in the WOMAC global assessment of disease activity (p=0.90) and response to therapy (p=0.74) in the combination group compared with a decrease of $48.8\%$ in the celecoxib group (p=0.92; figure 2D). Similarly, there were no differences in patients’ (p=0.51) and physicians’ (p=0.33) global assessments of disease activity or response to therapy (p=0.74 and 0.70, respectively). Over 70% of patients fulfilled the OMERACT-OARSI criteria in both treatments from 120 days onwards (p=0.16; figure 2E). At 6 months, both treatments achieved a 79% response rate (p=0.91; figure 2E). Both groups elicited a reduction from baseline >50% in joint swelling (figure 2F), from 12.5% (33/264) to 5.9% (14/246) for chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine, and from 14.0% (36/258) to 4.5% (10/258) for celecoxib (p=0.54). A similar reduction was also seen for effusions, from 6.8% (18/264) to 3.0% (7/246) and from 7.8% (20/258) to 4.1% (9/258), respectively (p=0.61; figure 2G). The consumption of rescue medication throughout the study was low and similar between treatments, except for the first month when use was higher in the combination group. No significant differences were observed afterwards (figure 2H).

Health-related quality of life

All components of the EuroQoL-5D showed improvements over the treatment period in both groups. At 6 months, no differences were apparent between groups in terms of mobility (p=0.16), self-care (p=0.94), usual activities (p=0.73), pain/discomfort (p=0.60), anxiety/depression (p=0.21) or general health status measured by the visual analogue score (p=0.54; table 2).
The overall proportion of patients having at least one treatment-emergent AE were 51.0% (155/304) in the chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine group and 50.5% (151/299) in the celecoxib group. In total, 17 of the AEs were serious, 7 (2.3%) in the chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine group and 10 (3.3%) in the celecoxib group. One serious AE was judged as definitely related to the study medication (allergic dermatitis) and one as possibly related (dizziness) (both in the celecoxib group); three serious AEs were judged to be probably related to both treatments across all outcomes. Indeed, the overall pain improvement calculated using area under the curve analyses was superior with celecoxib than with the combination (p<0.001 for the imputed per-protocol population and p=0.002 for the imputed intention-to-treat sensitivity population).

Both treatments had a good safety profile and tolerability in this population, which excluded patients with high cardiovascular or gastrointestinal risk. Celecoxib is recognised to increase the risk of cardiovascular thrombotic events, congestive heart failure and major gastrointestinal events compared with placebo,5 and, in the European Union, is contraindicated in patients with known cardiovascular and peripheral vascular disease. Around half of the patients in each group had at least one AE, most of which were of mild or moderate intensity, with only 17 events classified as serious. The observed tolerability in both groups was as expected from previous studies, such as GAIT.10

While the present results are in accordance with data from other studies for the combination,10 29 30 and for celecoxib in painful knee osteoarthritis at the same dosage,10 12–14 22 direct comparisons are limited by differences in study designs and settings.
drug formulations. The only randomised double-blind study that allows the comparison of the combination of chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine with celecoxib was the GAIT study. The data of efficacy and safety in the present study are consistent with those from GAIT in patients with severe knee pain.

Chondroitin and glucosamine have been recommended in some practice guidelines for the treatment of osteoarthritis. Both chondroitin sulfate and the two commercially available salts of glucosamine hydrochloride or sulfate are available as prescription medicines in the European Union for the treatment of osteoarthritis. The clinical evidence to support these medications is, however, conflicting. Consequently, current evidence-based guidelines on the management of osteoarthritis focus on topical treatments and oral analgesics, and some advise against treatment with chondroitin sulfate and glucosamine on the basis of lack of efficacy evidence, but not on potential harm. Conversely, the suboptimal efficacy and possibility of serious adverse drug reactions with long-term use of analgesics, NSAIDs and opioids are well recognised.

The present study, conducted in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee with severe pain, provides robust data to demonstrate the long-term efficacy and safety of chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine in the management of these patients, and suggests that this combination may, in addition, offer an alternative, especially for individuals with cardiovascular or gastrointestinal conditions who have contraindications for treatment with NSAIDs.

This study has some limitations. The preparation of chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine used has been approved as a prescription drug, and the present results cannot therefore be generalised to other compound mixtures, such as commercially available dietary supplements in the UK and the USA, or to the individual components themselves. As patients with known
cardiovascular disease and those at high risk for both cardiovascular and gastrointestinal disease were not included, it is not possible to extend the safety of the combination to this population. The study was designed as a non-inferiority trial with two active treatment arms. The use of a placebo group was not considered appropriate for ethical and methodological reasons. A non-inferiority trial requires that the reference treatment’s efficacy is established or is in widespread use, as is the case for celecoxib, so that a placebo or untreated control group would be deemed unethical. This is of special relevance in this specific patient population with moderate-to-severe pain. Furthermore, the use of a placebo arm was not considered necessary as the design of the MOVES study was similar to that of the GAIT study, which already compared both active treatments with placebo. Additionally, both treatment groups have already demonstrated superiority compared with placebo in former randomised controlled trials.

These results confirm that the combination of chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine hydrochloride has proven non-inferior to celecoxib in reducing pain. No differences were found for stiffness, functional limitations, joint swelling and effusion after 6 months of treatment in patients with severe pain from osteoarthritis of the knee, and the combination has a similar good safety profile and tolerability. This combination of SYSADOA

Figure 2 Western Ontario and McMaster osteoarthritis index (WOMAC) (A) pain, (B) stiffness and (C) function subscales, and (D) visual analogue scale by visit; (E) Outcome Measures in Rheumatology Clinical Trials and Osteoarthritis Research Society International (OMERACT-OARSI) responder criteria, (F) joint swelling, (G) joint effusion and (H) consumption of rescue medication, by visit. The p values compare values between treatments. Data are least-square means±SEM. CE, celecoxib; CS+GH, chondroitin sulfate plus glucosamine hydrochloride.
appears to be beneficial in the treatment of patients with osteoarthritis of the knee and should offer a safe and effective alternative for those patients with cardiovascular or gastrointestinal conditions.

Author affiliations
1University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA
2Osteoarthritis Research Unit, University of Montreal Hospital Research Centre (CRCHUM), Montreal, Quebec, Canada
3Sorbonne Universités, UPMC Université Paris 06, INSERM U1132, Université Paris-Diderot, Hôpital Lariboisière, Paris, France
4Department of Rheumatology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Montreal, Montreal, Quebec, Canada
5Instituto de Investigacion Sanitaria La Fe, Valencia, Spain
6Clinical Pharmacology Unit, Virgen del Rocío University Hospital, Seville, Spain
7Oxford NIHR Musculoskeletal Biomedical Research Unit, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
8MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK
10Department of Rheumatology, Sorbonne University, INSERM UMR 9388, UPMC, University of Paris 06, DHU I2B, Assistance Publique—Hôpitaux de Paris, Saint-Antoine Hospital, Paris, France
11INIBIC-Complejo Hospitalario Universitario A Coruña, A Coruña, Spain
12Leeds Institute of Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Medicine, University of Leeds & National Institute for Health Research Leeds Musculoskeletal Biomedical Research Unit, Leeds, UK
13Asociación Hipótesis Alternativa (H1), Biostatistics Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
14Bone and Cartilage Research Unit, Arthropôle Liège, University of Liège, Institute of Pathology, CHU Sart-Tilman, Liège, Belgium
15Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Department, Princess Paola Hospital, Marche-en-Famenne, Belgium
16Institute of Experimental Musculoskeletal Medicine, University Hospital Münster, Münster, Germany
17Université Paris Diderot, UFR Médecine; Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris, Hôpital Lariboisière, Fédération de Rhumatologie, Paris, France
18INSERM 1132, Université Paris-Diderot, Hôpital Lariboisière, Paris, France
19University of Utah School of Medicine, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
20Department of Pharmacology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Montreal, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Correction notice This article has been corrected since it was published Online First. Figure 1 has been corrected.

Collaborators MOVES Investigator Group.

Contributors MCH, JM-P and J-PP contributed equally to this work. MCH had full access to all of the data in the study and takes responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis. MCH, JM-P, JM, IM, JRC, NA, FB, FJB, PGC, GD, YH, TP, PR, AS, PSs and J-PP were responsible for study concept and design, acquisition, analysis or interpretation of the data, drafting of the manuscript and study supervision. IM, JRC, NA, FB, FJB, PGC, GD, TP, PR, AS, PSs and J-PP were responsible for critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content. GD was responsible for the statistical analysis. Additional contributions: Sophie Rushston-Smith, PhD (Medlink Healthcare Communications, UK) drafted the paper based on detailed information and guidance provided by the lead author, including published abstracts, and information provided by the sponsor, including the study protocol, statistical analysis plan and results. She also coordinated and integrated the comments and modifications suggested by all authors upon review. Her effort was funded by Biobéberica SA.

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Competing interests MH is a consultant to Biobéberica SA, Bristol Myers Squibb, Eli Lilly, EMD Serono SA, Iroko Pharmaceuticals, Novartis Pharma AG, Pfizer, Samumed LLC and Theraglyx LLC, and owns stock in Theraglyx LLC. JM-P is a shareholder of ArthroLab and has received consulting fees from AbbVie, Biobéberica, Merck & Co, and TRB Chemedica. JM has received personal fees for lectures from Biobéberica SA and Merck Sharp & Dohme during the 36 months prior to this publication. FJB has received grants (for clinical trials, conferences, advisory work, and publications) from AbbVie, Amgen, Biobéberica, Bristol Mayer, Celgene, Celltrion, Cellerix, Grunenthal, Gebro Pharma, Lilly, MSD, Merck Serono, Pfizer, Pierre Fabre, Roche, Sanofi, Servier, Tedec-Meiß and UCB, YH has received speaker fees from IBSA, Biobéberica and Expanscience, consulting fees from Galapagos, Flexion, Tilman SA, Artialis SA and Dynopharma, and research grants from Nestec, Biobéberica, Royal Canin and Artialis SA. PdS acts as a consultant for WEX Pharmaceuticals and has received payment for lectures from Biobéberica. J-PP is a shareholder of ArthroLab and has received consulting fees from AbbVie, Biobéberica, Merck & Co, Servier and TRB Chemedica.

Patient consent Obtained.

Ethics approval Local health authorities and the institutional review board of each centre approved the study. The trial was performed according to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and to Good Clinical Practice.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

Data sharing statement Additional unpublished data from the MOVES trial may be obtained by contacting Dr. Josep Verges, c/o Biobéberica S.A., Barcelona, Spain.

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REFERENCES


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<tr>
<td><strong>France</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Loic Boucher – Private consultant (Murs Erigne, France)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Alain Boye – Private consultant (Nantes, France)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Alain Campagne – Private consultant (Tours, France)</td>
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<td>Dr Domique Delsart – Private consultant (Bersee, France)</td>
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<td>Dr Dominique Lejay – Private consultant (Vieux Conde, France)</td>
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<td>Dr Philippe Remaud – Private consultant (Angers, France)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Pascal Richette – Hôpital Lariboisière (Paris, France)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Yves-Marie Rivoallan – Private consultant (Falaise, France)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Dr Patrick Robert – Private consultant (Laval, France)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Dominique Saillard – Private consultant (Tours, France)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germany</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Christoph Becher - Med. Hochschule Orthopädische Klinik li Im Annastift (Hannover, Germany)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Christel Contzen - Synexus (Leipzig, Germany)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Elizaveta Degtyareva - Synexus (Leipzig, Germany)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Martin Fuerst – Medbaltic (Kiel, Germany)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Irina Lohrbaecher – Synexus (Leipzig, Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Jasper Neidel - Orthopädie Zentrum (Hamburg, Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Gregory Stein - Klinikum Der Universität Zu Köln (Köln, Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Timo Zippelius - Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin (Berlin, Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Poland</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Jan Brzezicki – Centrum Kliniczno-Badawcze (Elblag, Poland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prof Marek Brzosko - Nzoz Biogenes Sp Z O O (Wroclaw, Poland)</td>
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<td>Dr Sławomir Jeka - Reumed Sp Z O O (Lublin, Poland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Marcin Mazurek - Ars Rheumatica Sp Z O O (Warsaw, Poland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Artur Racewicz - Osteo-Medic SC (Bialystok, Poland)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Anna Sawiec – Małopolskie Centrum Medyczne (Krakow, Poland)</td>
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Prof Piotr Wiland - Reumatika Centrum Reumatologii (Warsaw, Poland)

Dr Anna Zubrzycka - Centrum Medyczne Nowe Miasto (Białystok, Poland)

Dr José Luis Ballvé - CAP Florida (L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Spain)

Dr Miguel Belmonte - Hospital General de Castellón (Castellón, Spain)

Dr Francisco Blanco - Complejo Hospitalario Universitario a Coruña (A Coruña, Spain)

Dr Miguel Ángel Caracuel - Hospital Universitario Reina Sofía (Córdoba, Spain)

Dr José Gálvez - Hospital General Universitario Morales Meseguer de Murcia (Murcia, Spain)

Dr Alicia García - Hospital Universitario Virgen del Rocio (Sevilla, Spain)

Dr Montserrat López - CAP Mossèn Cinto Verdaguer (L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Spain)

Dr Emilio Martín - Hospital Universitario La Paz (Madrid, Spain)

Dr Ingrid Möller - Instituto Poal de Reumatología (Barcelona, Spain)

Dr Jordi Monfort - Hospital del Mar (Barcelona, Spain)

Dr Santiago Muñoz - Hospital Infanta Sofía (Madrid, Spain)

Dr Federico Navarro - Hospital Universitario Virgen Macarena (Sevilla, Spain)

Dr Cristóbal Orellana - Corporació Sanitària del Parc Taulí (Sabadell, Spain)

Dr Arturo Rodríguez de la Serna - Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau (Barcelona, Spain)

Dr Eduardo Úcar - Hospital de Basurto (Bilbao, Spain)

Prof Javier Vaquero - Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón (Madrid, Spain)

Statisticians

Ferran Torres, MD, PhD, Biostatistics and Data Management Platform, IDIBAPS; Asociación Hipótesis Alternativa (H1); Biostatistics Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

José Ríos, MSc, Biostatistics and Data Management Platform, IDIBAPS; Asociación Hipótesis Alternativa (H1); Biostatistics Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

Sponsor Clinical R&D Group

Dr Josep Vergés, MD, MSc, PhD, Clinical R&D Area, Bioiberica SA

Marta Herrero, MSc, Clinical R&D Area, Bioiberica SA

Laura Sánchez, MSc, Clinical R&D Area, Bioiberica SA
**Online Supplementary Table S2**  
Inclusion and exclusion criteria

### Inclusion criteria

- Age ≥40 years
- Diagnosis of primary osteoarthritis (American College of Rheumatology criteria\(^1\))
- Radiological stages II or III osteoarthritis (Kellgren and Lawrence criteria\(^2\))
- Pain in the knee on most days in the month before entering the trial
- Moderate-to-severe pain (WOMAC pain score\(^3\)\(^4\) >301) at the inclusion visit
- No clinical or significant laboratory abnormalities (in the judgment of the investigator)
- Negative pregnancy test at screening and use of an acceptable method of birth control for the duration of the study in women of child-bearing potential
- Not participating in another clinical trial
- Agree to attend all study-related visits. Patients provided written informed consent to participate in the study before initiating any study-related activities.
- Provide written informed consent to participate in the study before initiating any study-related activities.

### Subject exclusion criteria

- Known allergy to chondroitin sulphate or glucosamine hydrochloride, hypersensitivity to celecoxib, who have demonstrated allergic-type reactions to sulphonamides, experienced asthma, urticarial, or any allergic-type reaction after taking sulphonamides, aspirin, lactose, or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- Allergy to shellfish
- History of intolerance to acetaminophen
- Active malignancy or history of a malignancy within the past 5 years
- Any history of illness that, in the opinion of the investigator, might confound the results of the study or pose additional risk to the patient
- Concurrent arthritic disease (antecedents and/or current signs) that could confound or interfere with the evaluation of pain efficacy (e.g. chondrocalcinosis, Paget's disease of the ipsilateral limb to the target knee, rheumatoid arthritis, aseptic osteonecrosis, gout, septic arthritis, ochronosis, acromegaly, haemochromatosis, Wilson's disease, osteochondromatosis seronegative spondyloarthropathy, mixed connective tissue disease, collagen vascular disease, psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease)
- Pain in other parts of the body greater than the knee pain that could interfere with the evaluation of the index
Patients with fibromyalgia

History of arthroscopy in the affected joint within 6 months prior to study entry

Subjects who have undergone total knee replacement in the contralateral knee within 6 months prior to the Screening Visit and throughout the study

Subjects who plan surgery during the trial

Subjects with a history of heart attack or stroke, or who have experienced chest pain related to heart disease, or who have had serious diseases of the heart such as congestive heart failure (functional classes II–IV of the New York Heart Association)

Patients with high risk of cardiovascular events, according to the American Heart Association assessment of cardiovascular risk tables

Subjects with any significant diseases or conditions, including emotional or psychiatric disorders or substance abuse that, in the opinion of the investigator, are likely to alter the course of osteoarthritis, or the subject’s ability to complete the study

Subjects with poorly controlled diabetes mellitus, defined as haemoglobin A1c level >8%

Subjects with poorly controlled hypertension (sustained systolic blood pressure of >150 mm Hg or diastolic blood pressure >95 mm Hg)

Subjects with any active acute or chronic infections requiring antimicrobial therapy, or serious viral (e.g. hepatitis, herpes zoster, HIV positivity) or fungal infections

Subjects with a history of recurrent upper gastrointestinal ulceration or active inflammatory bowel disease (e.g. Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis), a significant coagulation defect, or any other condition, which in the investigator’s opinion might preclude the chronic use of celecoxib

Subjects who have been diagnosed as having or have been treated for oesophageal, gastric, pyloric channel, or duodenal ulceration within 30 days prior to receiving the first dose of study medication

Subjects with chronic liver or kidney disease, as defined by alanine transaminase or aspartate aminotransferase >1.0 two times the upper limit of normal) or blood urea nitrogen or serum creatinine > two times the upper limit of normal, at the screening visit

Subjects who have a history of alcohol or substance abuse within 3 years

Subjects receiving any investigational drug within 30 days or 5 half lives (whichever is greater) prior to the inclusion visit
Female subjects who are breastfeeding

Treatment-related exclusion criteria

Subjects using corticosteroids (oral, injectable), therapeutic dose of glucosamine, chondroitin sulphate, or diacerein during the 12 weeks preceding inclusion

Subjects using hyaluronic acid (intra-articular target knee) during the 26 weeks preceding inclusion

Subjects using natural health products, homeopathy, and creams or analgesic gels during the week preceding inclusion

Subjects subjected to radioactive synovectomy (target knee)

Subjects receiving analgesics including opioids such as tramadol and codeine, or NSAIDs during the week preceding inclusion. Aspirin (up to 325 mg/day) for cardiovascular reasons could be continued

Subjects who require acetaminophen at daily doses >3000 mg (3 g) most of the days of the month prior to inclusion

Subjects who are taking lithium carbonate, phenytoin or anticoagulants (e.g. warfarin) (with the exception of aspirin up to a maximum daily dose of 325 mg)

Subjects who use oral or topical COX-2 inhibitors during the week preceding inclusion

REFERENCES


**Online Supplementary Table S3.** Assessment of the presence or absence or joint swelling and/or effusion in study knees at each visit

| Technique I. Useful for copious effusions and involves placing one hand on top of the patella and the other below it, applying pressure towards the centre of the knee almost as if to send the supposed effusion towards the patellar area. With both index fingers, apply pressure to the central area and observe how the patella lowers and is once again pushed up by the effusion. |
| Technique II. In less copious effusions than those above, place the fingers of the detector hand on both sides of the patella while the other hand applies pressure inwards. If an effusion is present, you will note that the detector fingers move apart. |
| Technique III. Useful in mild effusions. It involves sending all the fluid in the medial compartment laterally and subsequently, from there, sending it medially. Note the synovial thickening of this area. For this, the medial compartment can be emptied by moving the palms of your fingers up and down. Immediately afterwards, the same up and down emptying movement is performed with the backs of the fingers, thereby emptying the lateral compartment, whereupon the appearance of medial thickening can be observed. |
Online Supplementary Table S4  Primary efficacy outcome: WOMAC pain score by visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visit (days)</th>
<th>Chondroitin sulphate+glucosamine hydrochloride</th>
<th>celecoxib*</th>
<th>p Value†</th>
<th>Treatment differences‡</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IUDR: PP population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>372.0 ± 41.8</td>
<td>370.6 ± 41.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>267.7 (255.6; 279.9)</td>
<td>236.4 (224.1; 248.7)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>231.0 (218.1; 243.8)*</td>
<td>206.0 (193.0; 219.1)*</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>−24.9 (−43.2; −6.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>209.9 (196.4; 223.4)*</td>
<td>183.5 (169.7; 197.2)*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>−26.4 (−45.7; −7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>185.8 (171.2; 200.4)*</td>
<td>184.7 (169.8; 199.6)</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>−1.1 (−22.0; 19.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baseline observation carried forward:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PP population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>372.0 ± 41.8</td>
<td>370.6 ± 41.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>267.7 (255.5; 279.8)</td>
<td>236.3 (224.0; 248.6)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>−31.4 (−48.7; −14.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>230.7 (217.9; 243.4)*</td>
<td>205.7 (192.8; 218.6)*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>−25.0 (−43.1; −6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>208.2 (195.0; 221.4)*</td>
<td>183.6 (170.2; 196.9)*</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>−24.7 (−43.5; −5.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>183.1 (169.1; 197.1)*</td>
<td>178.9 (164.7; 193.1)</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>−4.1 (−24.1; 15.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Available data only: PP population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>372.0 ± 41.8</td>
<td>370.6 ± 41.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>267.5 (255.4; 279.7)</td>
<td>236.1 (223.8; 248.4)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>−31.4 (−48.7; −14.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>229.3 (216.6; 242.0)*</td>
<td>203.0 (190.1; 216.0)*</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>−26.3 (−44.5; −8.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>204.3 (191.2; 217.4)*</td>
<td>177.0 (163.6; 190.3)*</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>−27.3 (−46.0; −8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>176.4 (162.4; 190.3)*</td>
<td>171.3 (157.0; 185.6)</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>−5.1 (−25.1; 14.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IUDR: ITT population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>372.6 ± 41.8</td>
<td>371.2 ± 41.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>269.3 (257.4; 281.1)</td>
<td>241.2 (229.3; 253.1)</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>−28.1 (−44.9; −11.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>236.1 (223.4; 248.8)*</td>
<td>213.0 (200.1; 225.8)*</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>−23.1 (−41.2; −5.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>216.9 (203.4; 230.3)*</td>
<td>192.8 (179.2; 206.4)*</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>−24.1 (−43.2; −5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Baseline (95% CI)</td>
<td>ITT (95% CI)</td>
<td>p Value</td>
<td>Difference (95% CI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>270.1 (258.3; 282.0)</td>
<td>241.2 (229.3; 253.1)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>-28.9 (-45.7; -12.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>233.7 (221.3; 246.2)</td>
<td>211.5 (199.0; 224.0)</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>-22.2 (-39.9; -4.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>213.0 (200.0; 225.9)</td>
<td>191.5 (178.5; 204.6)</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>-21.4 (-39.8; -3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>188.9 (175.1; 202.6)</td>
<td>187.9 (174.0; 201.7)</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>-1.0 (-20.5; 18.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Baseline observation carried forward:

**ITT population**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Baseline (95% CI)</th>
<th>ITT (95% CI)</th>
<th>p Value</th>
<th>Difference (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>269.0 (257.1; 280.8)</td>
<td>240.8 (228.9; 252.7)</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-28.2 (-44.9; -11.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>230.3 (217.8; 242.7)</td>
<td>206.6 (194.0; 219.2)</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-23.7 (-41.4; -6.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>205.8 (192.9; 218.7)</td>
<td>181.1 (168.1; 194.2)</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>-24.7 (-43.0; -6.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>177.4 (163.7; 191.2)</td>
<td>175.9 (161.8; 189.9)</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>-1.6 (-21.3; 18.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Continuous variables are mean±SD at inclusion and baseline and adjusted least square means (95% CIs) for other measurements. Significant differences within-treatment as compared with the previous visit, from the 30-day visit onwards (p<0.001).

†p value of treatment effect.

‡Adjusted mean (95% CI).

ITT, intention to treat; IUDR, imputation using the drop-out reason; PP, per protocol.