Conclusion: This preliminary analysis suggests that assessment of IFN activity has a role in predicting response to RTX. A novel IFN score (Score-B) was more predictive than classic ISGs (Score-A). These results add to a body of work showing that IFN-Score-B predicts clinically significant outcomes independently of overall IFN activity. Future work will analyse this biomarker in a larger cohort of patients and integrate with other putative clinical and biological predictors of response.

REFERENCE:

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OFF-LABEL USE OF RITUXIMAB IN RHEUMATIC DISEASES, A SWITZER TERTIARY CENTRE EXPERIENCE

Alexandre Dumusc, Thomas Huegle, Pascal Zufferey. University Hospital Lausanne (CHUV), Rheumatology, Lausanne, Switzerland

Background: Rituximab (RTX), a monoclonal antibody targeting CD20, is licenced for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) for many years and more recently for ANCA-associated vasculitis. RTX is frequently used off-label to treat other auto-immune diseases (AID), especially connective tissue diseases (CTD). There are no published data about off-label use of RTX in AID in Switzerland.

Objectives: To describe off-label use of RTX in a real-life setting, when treating AID.

Methods: Retrospective cohort study of all patients treated with RTX in the Rheumatology Department between 2005 and 2017. Clinical efficacy of RTX after 12 and 24 months of treatment was evaluated with a semi-quantitative scale (no response (NR), partial (PR) and complete response (CR)). RTX discontinuation rate was also analysed using Kaplan-Meier curves. Adverse events (AE), serious AE (SAE) were included in the safety analysis. Occurrences of hypogammaglobulinemia and anti-rituximab antibodies (ADA) were also reported.

Results: 178 patients treated with RTX could be identified: 28% for CTD, 63% for RA and 10% for other AID.

Rituximab was used off-label in 73% of the patients according to official Swiss indications. No significant differences in terms of clinical response were observed in off-label indication after 12 months (NR: 15%/13%, PR:48%/52%, CR:37%/35%, n=108/31) and 24 months (NR:13%/9%, PR:37%/35%, CR:51%/57%, n=79/23) of treatment when compared with prescriptions following official Swiss indications, respectively. RTX discontinuation rate (HR 1.03 95% CI 0.71-1.49) was also similar between both groups.

Clinical response after RTX treatment did not differ significantly between patients with CTD and RA after 12 months (NR:10%12%, PR:50%/52%, CR:40%/36%, n=42/48) and 24 months (NR:7%/9%, PR:32/44%, CR:61/47%, n=28/64), respectively. Detailed results are available in Table 1. Survival curves of rituximab treatment from CTD group closely matched that from RA group (HR 0.96 95% CI 0.65-1.44). Causes of RTX treatment discontinuation in patients with CTD (n=27) and RA (n=72) consisted of lack of efficiency (63%/56%), adverse event (19%/35%) and remission (19%/10%), respectively. SAE (n=113) occurred in 33% of the patients and consisted mainly of infectious SAE (43%) and perfusion-related AE (6%). 6 patients died during RTX treatment. Low IgG levels were observed in 34% (50/149) of the patients graded as mild (20%), moderate (11%) or severe (3%). The nadir of IgG levels occurred after 4.5(3.5) years (mean (SD)) of RTX treatment. ADA were observed in 6/51 patients.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>CTD</th>
<th>RA</th>
<th>Other AIDs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>49/49 (100)</td>
<td>38/42 (90)</td>
<td>26/28 (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial or complete response after 12 months of RTX treatment (n=49)</td>
<td>12/12 (100)</td>
<td>9/9 (100)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial or complete response after 24 months of RTX treatment (n=49)</td>
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RTX: rituximab; AE: adverse event, MCTD: Mixed connective tissue disease; UCTD: Undifferentiated connective tissue disease.

*off-label prescription according to Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products (Swissmedic)

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THE PLUTO STUDY: INTRAVERNOS BELIMUMAB IN CHILDREN WITH SYSTEMIC LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS

Nicolina Rupepa1, Carlos Abu-Ben-Mendoza2, Diego O. Vidta1, Immaculada Calvo1, Deborah M. Levy2, Julia Calderon Gallegos3, Manuel Fernandez2, Vyacheslav Chasnyk1, Vladimir Keltsev1, Jordi Anton1, Maria Gastanaga1, Michael Shishov2, Alina Boteanu1, Michael Henrickson2, Damon Bass3, Ken Clark4, Anne Hammer5, Beulah Ji4, Antonio Nino5, David Roth5, Herbert Struempfer2, Mei-Lun Wang5, Alberto Martini1, Daniel J Lovell2, Vyacheslav Chasnyk1, Vladimir Keltsev1, Jordi Anton1, Maria Gastanaga1, Michael Shishov2, Alina Boteanu1, Michael Henrickson2, Damon Bass3, Ken Clark4, Anne Hammer5, Beulah Ji4, Antonio Nino5, David Roth5, Herbert Struempfer2, Mei-Lun Wang5, Alberto Martini1, Daniel J Lovell2, Vyacheslav Chasnyk1, Vladimir Keltsev1, Jordi Anton1, Maria Gastanaga1, Michael Shishov2, Alina Boteanu1, Michael Henrickson2, Damon Bass3, Ken Clark4, Anne Hammer5, Beulah Ji4, Antonio Nino5, David Roth5, Herbert Struempfer2, Mei-Lun Wang5, Alberto Martini1, Daniel J Lovell2

Background: Belimumab (BEL), a monoclonal antibody targeting the B-lymphocyte stimulator, is approved in adults with active systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). This is the first clinical trial of belimumab in pediatric patients with childhood-onset SLE (cSLE)

Objectives: PLUTO, a Phase 2, randomised, double-blind trial (BEL114055; NCT01649765), evaluated the efficacy, safety and pharmacokinetics (PK) of intravenous (IV) BEL vs placebo (PBO), plus standard care (SoC), in cSLE.

Methods: Patients with cSLE 5–17 years of age were randomised to BEL 10 mg/kg IV or PBO every 4 weeks, plus SoC. Primary endpoint: SRI4 at Week 52. Major secondary endpoints: PRINTO/ACR 30 and 50 cSLE evaluation criteria for improvement at Week 52; cSLE core response variables at Week 52; and sustained SRI4 and ParentGA patient (well-being) responses (Weeks 44–52). Other endpoints: components of SRI4 at Week 52; and frequency of severe flares using the