HYPERTENSION

A new drug for pulmonary hypertension

Vardenafil, a new phosphodiesterase-5 inhibitor, has been found to be well tolerated and effective in treating pulmonary arterial hypertension, and could thus become the treatment of choice for this condition.

Pulmonary arterial hypertension is characterized by an increase in vascular resistance in the lungs and can lead to heart failure and death. Three classes of vasodilators, including prostacyclin analogs (such as iloprost), endothelin receptor antagonists (such as bosentan) and phosphodiesterase inhibitors, can be used to treat the condition. In China, however, only iloprost and bosentan are available, but most patients are unable to afford these drugs. Vardenafil, a cheaper alternative, had not been tested for long-term safety and efficacy in patients. Thus, Zhi Cheng Jing and colleagues conducted a preliminary study to evaluate the effects of vardenafil over a period

of 1 year in 45 patients with pulmonary arterial hypertension. Treatment was associated with a significant increase in exercise capacity and improvements in hemodynamic parameters. In addition, the drug was well tolerated.

These findings indicate that vardenafil could represent an effective and affordable treatment option. Jing and colleagues have now launched EVALUATION, a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled multicenter trial, to further assess vardenafil and to establish the optimal dose for the treatment of patients with pulmonary arterial hypertension. “More and more patients in developing countries might now have the chance to receive therapies,” says Jing.

Sharmini Rajanayagam

Original article Jing, Z.-C. *et al.* Vardenafil therapy for patients with pulmonary arterial hypertension. A one-year, multicentre, open-label study. *Heart* doi:10.1136/hrt.2009.169417