**LENALIDOMIDE FOR
MULTIPLE MYELOMA**

Previous studies have shown that thalidomide plus high-dose dexamethasone (thal/dex) has significant activity in patients with newly diagnosed multiple myeloma (MM), but does not improve survival compared with high-dose dexamethasone; therefore, better agents are needed. Superior outcomes for lenalidomide plus high-dose dexamethasone (len/dex) compared with high-dose dexamethasone have been observed.

Now, a case-control analysis has provided evidence of a clear progression-free survival and overall survival benefit for len/dex compared with thal/dex. "This is the first study to compare the efficacy and safety of thalidomide versus lenalidomide, and is of importance because a true randomized comparison of these two regimens probably won't occur" comments Francesca Gay, lead investigator of the study.

The researchers retrospectively assessed 411 patients with newly diagnosed MM to compare the efficacy and toxic effects of thal/dex versus len/dex. Significantly more patients in the len/dex arm achieved at least a partial response (80.3% versus 61.2%, $P < 0.001$). Moreover, more patients treated with lenalidomide had a higher very good partial response and complete response. The overall survival was also significantly longer among the len/dex patients even when adjusting for the longer duration of therapy for these patients owing to high discontinuation rates in the thal/dex arm. More grade 3–4 hematologic toxicities were noted with lenalidomide and more peripheral neuropathy and thrombotic events were seen with thalidomide.

The investigators note "We demonstrate that len/dex results in better response rates and survival, and show that the type of serious toxicities with the two drugs is also quite different".

Lisa Hutchinson

Original article Gay, F. *et al.* Lenalidomide plus dexamethasone versus thalidomide plus dexamethasone in newly diagnosed multiple myeloma: a comparative analysis of 411 patients. *Blood* **115**, 1343–1350 (2010)