

Kepivance Improves Quality Of Life For Cancer Patients

National Cancer Institute



Chemotherapy and radiation are widely accepted treatments for many forms of cancers. Although they can be highly effective in eliminating or shrinking tumors, they often have serious side effects that destroy normal tissues. One of the most painful, debilitating, and depressing side effects of these treatments is mucositis, which results in painful ulcerations that attack the lining of the mouth. Mucositis can make a patient's everyday activities, such as eating, drinking, swallowing, and talking, difficult or impossible.

A research team led by Jeffrey Rubin, M.D., at the National Cancer Institute, within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Md., made an important finding in the late 1980s. They discovered a compound that has proven effective in fighting oral mucositis.

“ This substance, called keratinocyte growth factor (KGF), occurs naturally in the human body and stimulates cells on the surface layer of the mouth to grow, which speeds healing of ulcers.

Palifermin, a manmade version of KGF, is equally effective in treating mucositis.

The NIH then partnered with Amgen, a company specializing in chemotherapy-related products, to develop a therapeutic based on KGF.

Amgen received an exclusive license from the NIH for its KGF technology in 1992.

After years of research and testing Amgen has released its anti-mucositis drug, Kepivance™.

Kepivance™ was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2004 for reducing the incidence and duration of oral mucositis in leukemia patients undergoing bone marrow/blood cell transplantation.

Prior to Kepivance™, no effective treatment existed for this condition. Currently this drug benefits about 11,000 adult Americans who undergo bone marrow transplants each year. This reduces medical costs because patients recover more quickly and hospital stays are shorter.

Kepivance™ may also enable patients to undergo fuller doses of treatment and acquire fewer infections during their hospital stay.

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