
Reprints or correspondence: Dr. Joe S. Dylewski, Director of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, St. Mary’s Hospital, 3830 Lacombe Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H3T 1M5, Canada.

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Abatement of Cutaneous Kaposi’s Sarcoma Associated with Cidofovir Treatment

Sir—Hammoud et al. [1] reported the abatement of Kaposi’s sarcoma (KS) in an AIDS patient who was being treated with cidofovir for cytomegalovirus (CMV) retinitis. The investigators concluded that cidofovir, as well as other agents active against herpesviruses, may have a therapeutic role in the treatment of KS. In fact, cidofovir and other antitherpetic agents (with the exception of acyclovir) have been found to inhibit the replication of human herpesvirus type 8 (HHV-8), the presumable etiologic agent of KS, in cell culture [2, 3].

We recently treated a patient without AIDS who had classic KS by intralesional injections of cidofovir [4]. After five weekly injections of the drug, no clinical, histological, immunohistochemical (persistence of Bcl-2 and p53 protein expression), or virological (persistence of HHV-8 DNA sequences) changes were noted. The absence of an effect of intralesional injections of this potent DNA polymerase inhibitor is in agreement with the findings that most KS cells are latently infected by HHV-8 [5]. As opportunistic infections such as those due to CMV may trigger the development of KS (namely, through the release of cytokines and growth factors [6]), we think that the inhibition of CMV replication by cidofovir, in conjunction with antiretroviral therapy [7], may have contributed to the abatement of KS lesions that was observed by Hammoud et al. [1].

Thierry Simonart, Jean-Christophe Noel, Erik De Clercq, and Robert Snoeck
Departments of Dermatology and Pathology, Erasme University Hospital, Brussels, and Rega Institute for Medical Research, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

References

Reprints or correspondence: Dr. Robert Snoeck, Rega Institute for Medical Research, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Minderbroedersstraat 10, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium.

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Prevaccination Screening for Hepatitis B Among Sexually Active Adolescents and Young Adults

Sir—We applaud the efforts by Alderman et al. [1] to provide hepatitis B vaccination for adolescents and young adults in an inner-city clinic. Although hepatitis B vaccination has been recommended for adolescents and adults with risk factors for hepatitis B virus infection since the vaccine was licensed in 1981, the rate of vaccination coverage among most of these risk groups remains low. We agree with the investigators’ conclusion that prevaccination screening is not cost-effective among most populations of sexually active adolescents. However, prevaccination screening is likely to be even less cost-effective than calculated by the investigators, because many participants younger than 19 years of age are eligible for hepatitis B vaccination under the federal program of Vaccines for Children. Under the federal contract, hepatitis B vaccine is available in adolescent formulations through this program at $9.45 per dose, compared with $38.00 per dose in the study by Alderman et al. Information about how to participate in the Vaccines for Children program is available from immunization programs at state health departments.

For persons 19 years of age or older, vaccine cost has been a primary barrier to providing hepatitis B vaccine in settings where persons with behavioral risk factors for hepatitis B virus infection can be readily identified, including sexually transmitted disease clinics, family-planning clinics, drug-treatment clinics, and correctional facilities. To overcome this barrier, insurance coverage is needed for hepatitis B vaccination for adults in both the private and public sectors, such as exists for vaccination for influenza and pneumococcal disease (two other major vaccine-preventable