Rixathon®

Rituximab

Concentrate for solution for intravenous infusion

1. NAME OF THE MEDICINAL PRODUCT

Rixathon

2. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE COMPOSITION

Each mL contains 10 mg of rituximab.
10 ml vial: Each vial containing 100 mg of rituximab.
50 ml vial: Each vial containing 500 mg of rituximab.

Rituximab is a genetically engineered chimeric mouse/human monoclonal antibody representing a glycosylated immunoglobulin with human IgG1 constant regions and murine light-chain and heavy- chain variable region sequences. The antibody is produced by mammalian (Chinese hamster ovary) cell suspension culture and purified by affinity chromatography and ion exchange, including specific viral inactivation and removal procedures.

Excipients with known effects:
This medicinal product contains 2.3 mmol (52.6 mg) sodium per 10 mL vial.
This medicinal product contains 11.5 mmol (263.2 mg) sodium per 50 mL vial.
For the full list of excipients, see section 6.1.

3. PHARMACEUTICAL FORM

Concentrate for solution for infusion.
Clear, colourless to slightly yellowish liquid.

Rixathon is a biosimilar medicinal product that has been demonstrated to be similar in quality, safety and efficacy to the reference medicinal product Mabthera. Please be aware of any differences in the indications between the biosimilar medicinal product and the reference medicinal product. The biosimilar is not to be switched with the reference medicinal product unless specifically stated otherwise. More detailed information regarding biosimilar medicinal products is available on the website of the Ministry of Health:
https://www.health.gov.il/UnitsOffice/HD/MTI/Drugs/Registration/Pages/Biosimilars.aspx

4. CLINICAL PARTICULARS

4.1 Therapeutic indications

Rixathon is indicated for the following indications:
Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL)
Rixathon is indicated for the treatment of patients with relapsed or refractory low-grade or follicular, B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Rixathon is indicated for the treatment of previously untreated patients with low-grade or follicular lymphoma in combination with chemotherapy.

Rixathon is indicated for the treatment of patients with CD20 positive diffuse large B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in combination with CHOP chemotherapy.

Rixathon maintenance therapy is indicated for the treatment of follicular lymphoma patients responding to induction therapy.

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL)
Rixathon in combination with chemotherapy is indicated for the treatment of patients with previously untreated and relapsed/refractory chronic lymphocytic leukaemia. Only limited data are available on efficacy and safety for patients previously treated with monoclonal antibodies including rituximab or patients refractory to previous rituximab plus chemotherapy.

Rheumatoid arthritis
Rixathon is indicated, in combination with methotrexate, to reduce signs and symptoms in adult patients with moderately to severely active rheumatoid arthritis who had an inadequate response or intolerance to one or more TNF antagonist therapies.

Granulomatosis with polyangiitis and microscopic polyangiitis
Rixathon, in combination with glucocorticoids, is indicated for the treatment of adult patients with granulomatosis with polyangiitis (GPA) (Wegener's Granulomatosis (WG)) and microscopic polyangiitis (MPA).

Pemphigus vulgaris (PV)
Rixathon is indicated for the treatment of adult patients with moderate to severe pemphigus vulgaris (PV).

4.2 Posology and method of administration

Rixathon should be administered under the close supervision of an experienced healthcare professional, and in an environment where full resuscitation facilities are immediately available (see section 4.4).

Premedication and prophylactic medications
Premedication consisting of an anti-pyretic and an antihistaminic, e.g. paracetamol and diphenhydramine, should always be given before each administration of Rixathon.

In patients with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, premedication with glucocorticoids should be considered if Rixathon is not given in combination with glucocorticoid- containing chemotherapy.

Prophylaxis with adequate hydration and administration of uricostatics starting 48 hours prior to start of therapy is recommended for CLL patients to reduce the risk of tumour lysis syndrome. For CLL patients whose lymphocyte counts are > 25 x 10^9/L it is recommended to administer prednisone/prednisolone 100 mg intravenous shortly before infusion with Rixathon to decrease the rate and severity of acute infusion reactions and/or cytokine release syndrome.

In patients with rheumatoid arthritis or pemphigus vulgaris, premedication with 100 mg intravenous methylprednisolone should be completed 30 minutes prior to Rixathon infusions to decrease the incidence and severity of infusion related reactions (IRRs).

In patients with granulomatosis with polyangiitis (Wegener's) or microscopic polyangiitis, methylprednisolone given intravenously for 1 to 3 days at a dose of 1000 mg per day is recommended prior to the first infusion of Rixathon (the last dose of methylprednisolone may be given on the same day as the first infusion of Rixathon). This should be followed by oral prednisone 1 mg/kg/day (not to exceed 80 mg/day and tapered as rapidly as possible based on clinical need) during and after Rixathon treatment.

Pneumocystis jirovecii pneumonia (PJP) prophylaxis is recommended for patients with GPA/MPA or PV during and following Rixathon treatment, as appropriate according to local clinical practice guidelines.

Posology Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
Follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
Combination therapy
The recommended dose of Rixathon in combination with chemotherapy for induction treatment of previously untreated or relapsed/refractory patients with follicular lymphoma is: 375 mg/m² body surface area per cycle, for up to 8 cycles.

Rixathon should be administered on day 1 of each chemotherapy cycle, after intravenous administration of the glucocorticoid component of the chemotherapy if applicable.

Maintenance therapy
- Previously untreated follicular lymphoma
  The recommended dose of Rixathon used as a maintenance treatment for patients with previously untreated follicular lymphoma who have responded to induction treatment is: 375 mg/m² body surface area once every 2 months (starting 2 months after the last dose of induction therapy) until disease progression or for a maximum period of two years.
- Relapsed/refractory follicular lymphoma
  The recommended dose of Rixathon used as a maintenance treatment for patients with relapsed/refractory follicular lymphoma who have responded to induction treatment is: 375 mg/m² body surface area once every 3 months (starting 3 months after the last dose of induction therapy) until disease progression or for a maximum period of two years.

Monotherapy
- Relapsed/refractory follicular lymphoma
  The recommended dose of Rixathon monotherapy used as induction treatment for adult patients with stage III-IV follicular lymphoma who are chemoresistant or are in their second or subsequent relapse after chemotherapy is: 375 mg/m² body surface area, administered as an intravenous infusion once weekly for four weeks.

  For retreatment with Rixathon monotherapy for patients who have responded to previous treatment with rituximab monotherapy for relapsed/refractory follicular lymphoma, the recommended dose is: 375 mg/m² body surface area, administered as an intravenous infusion once weekly for four weeks (see section 5.1).

Diffuse large B cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
Rixathon should be used in combination with CHOP chemotherapy. The recommended dosage is 375 mg/m² body surface area, administered on day 1 of each chemotherapy cycle for 8 cycles after intravenous infusion of the glucocorticoid component of CHOP. Safety and efficacy of rituximab have not been established in combination with other chemotherapies in diffuse large B cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Dose adjustments during treatment
No dose reductions of Rixathon are recommended. When Rixathon is given in combination with chemotherapy, standard dose reductions for the chemotherapeutic medicinal products should be applied.

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia
The recommended dosage of Rixathon in combination with chemotherapy for previously untreated and relapsed/refractory patients is 375 mg/m² body surface area administered on day 0 of the first treatment cycle followed by 500 mg/m² body surface area administered on day 1 of each subsequent cycle for 6 cycles in total. The chemotherapy should be given after Rixathon infusion.

Rheumatoid arthritis
A course of Rixathon consists of two 1000 mg intravenous infusions. The recommended dosage of Rixathon is 1000 mg by intravenous infusion followed by a second 1000 mg intravenous infusion two weeks later.

Subsequent courses should be administrated every 24 weeks or based on clinical evaluation, but not sooner than every 16 weeks.

Available data suggest that clinical response is usually achieved within 16 - 24 weeks of an initial treatment course. Continued therapy should be carefully reconsidered in patients who show no evidence of therapeutic benefit within this time period.

Granulomatosis with polyangiitis and microscopic polyangiitis
The recommended dosage of Rixathon for induction of remission therapy of granulomatosis with polyangiitis and microscopic polyangiitis is 375 mg/m² body surface area, administered as an intravenous infusion once weekly for 4 weeks (four infusions in total).

Pemphigus vulgaris
The recommended dosage of Rixathon for the treatment of pemphigus vulgaris is 1000 mg administered as an IV infusion followed two weeks later by a second 1000 mg IV infusion in combination with a tapering course of glucocorticoids.

Maintenance treatment
A maintenance infusion of 500 mg IV should be administered at month 12 and then every 6 months thereafter based on clinical evaluation.

Treatment of relapse
In the event of relapse, patients may receive 1000 mg IV. The healthcare provider should also consider resuming or increasing the patient's glucocorticoid dose based on clinical evaluation. Subsequent infusions may be administered no sooner than 16 weeks following the previous infusion.

Special populations
Paediatric population
The safety and efficacy of rituximab in children below 18 years has not been established. No data are available.

Elderly
No dose adjustment is required in elderly patients (aged >65 years).

Method of administration
Rixathon is for intravenous use. The prepared Rixathon solution should be administered as an intravenous infusion through a dedicated line. It should not be administered as an intravenous push or bolus.

Patients should be closely monitored for the onset of cytokine release syndrome (see section 4.4). Patients who develop evidence of severe reactions, especially severe dyspnoea, bronchospasm or hypoxia should have the infusion interrupted immediately. Patients with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma should then be evaluated for evidence of tumour lysis syndrome including appropriate laboratory tests and, for pulmonary infiltration, with a chest X-ray. In all patients, the infusion should not be restarted until complete resolution of all symptoms, and normalisation of laboratory values and chest X-ray findings. At this time, the infusion can be initially resumed at not more than one-half the previous rate.
If the same severe adverse reactions occur for a second time, the decision to stop the treatment should be seriously considered on a case by case basis.

Mild or moderate infusion-related reactions (IRR) (section 4.8) usually respond to a reduction in the rate of infusion. The infusion rate may be increased upon improvement of symptoms.

First infusion
The recommended initial rate for infusion is 50 mg/h; after the first 30 minutes, it can be escalated in 50 mg/h increments every 30 minutes, to a maximum of 400 mg/h.

Subsequent infusions
All indications
Subsequent doses of Rixathon can be infused at an initial rate of 100 mg/h, and increased by 100 mg/h increments at 30 minute intervals, to a maximum of 400 mg/h.

Rheumatoid arthritis only
Alternative subsequent, faster, infusion schedule

If patients did not experience a serious infusion related reaction with their first or subsequent infusions of a dose of 1000 mg Rixathon administered over the standard infusion schedule, a more rapid infusion can be administered for second and subsequent infusions using the same concentration as in previous infusions (4 mg/mL in a 250 mL volume). Initiate at a rate of 250mg/hour for the first 30 minutes and then 600 mg/hour for the next 90 minutes. If the more rapid infusion is tolerated, this infusion schedule can be used when administering subsequent infusions.

Patients who have clinically significant cardiovascular disease, including arrhythmias, or previous serious infusion reactions to any prior biologic therapy or to rituximab, should not be administered the more rapid infusion.

4.3 Contraindications

Contraindications for use in non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia
Hypersensitivity to the active substance or to murine proteins, or to any of the other excipients listed in section 6.1.
Active, severe infections (see section 4.4).
Patients in a severely immunocompromised state.

Contraindications for use in rheumatoid arthritis, granulomatosis with polyangiitis (GPA), microscopic polyangiitis (MPA) and pemphigus vulgaris
Hypersensitivity to the active substance or to murine proteins, or to any of the other excipients listed in section 6.1.

Active, severe infections (see section 4.4). Patients in a severely immunocompromised state.
Severe heart failure (New York Heart Association Class IV) or severe, uncontrolled cardiac disease (see section 4.4 regarding other cardiovascular diseases).

4.4 Special warnings and precautions for use

Traceability
In order to improve traceability of biological medicinal products, the tradename and batch number of the administered product should be clearly recorded (or stated) in the patient file.

Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML)
Very rare cases of fatal PML have been reported following use of rituximab. Patients must be monitored at regular intervals for any new or worsening neurological symptoms or signs that may be suggestive of PML. If PML is suspected, further dosing must be suspended until PML has been excluded. The clinician should evaluate the patient to determine if the symptoms are indicative of neurological dysfunction, and if so, whether these symptoms are possibly suggestive of PML. Consultation with a Neurologist should be considered as clinically indicated.

If any doubt exists, further evaluation, including MRI scan preferably with contrast, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) testing for JC Viral DNA and repeat neurological assessments, should be considered.
The physician should be particularly alert to symptoms suggestive of PML that the patient may not notice (e.g. cognitive, neurological or psychiatric symptoms). Patients should also be advised to inform their partner or caregivers about their treatment, since they may notice symptoms that the patient is not aware of.
If a patient develops PML, the dosing of rituximab must be permanently discontinued.
Following reconstitution of the immune system in immunocompromised patients with PML, stabilisation or improved outcome has been seen. It remains unknown if early detection of PML and suspension of rituximab therapy may lead to similar stabilisation or improved outcome.

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia
Infusion related reactions
Rituximab is associated with infusion related reactions, which may be related to release of cytokines and/or other chemical mediators. Cytokine release syndrome may be clinically indistinguishable from acute hypersensitivity reactions.

This set of reactions which includes syndrome of cytokine release, tumour lysis syndrome and anaphylactic and hypersensitivity reactions are described below.

Severe infusion related reactions with fatal outcome have been reported during postmarketing use of the rituximab intravenous formulation, with an onset ranging within 30 minutes to 2 hours after starting the first rituximab intravenous infusion. They were characterized by pulmonary events and in some cases included rapid tumour lysis and features of tumour lysis syndrome in addition to fever, chills, rigors, hypotension, urticaria, angioedema and other symptoms (see section 4.8).

Severe cytokine release syndrome is characterised by severe dyspnoea, often accompanied by bronchospasm and hypoxia, in addition to fever, chills, rigors, urticaria, and angioedema. This syndrome may be associated with some features of tumour lysis syndrome such as hyperuricaemia, hyperkalaemia, hypocalcaemia, hyperphosphataemia, acute renal failure, elevated lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) and may be associated with acute respiratory failure and death. The acute respiratory failure may be accompanied by events such as pulmonary interstitial infiltration or oedema, visible on a chest X-ray. The syndrome frequently manifests itself within one or two hours of initiating the first infusion. Patients with a history of pulmonary insufficiency or those with pulmonary tumour infiltration may be at greater risk of poor outcome and should be treated with increased caution.
Patients who develop severe cytokine release syndrome should have their infusion interrupted immediately (see section 4.2) and should receive aggressive symptomatic treatment. Since initial improvement of clinical symptoms may be followed by deterioration, these patients should be closely monitored until tumour lysis syndrome and pulmonary infiltration have been resolved or ruled out.
Further treatment of patients after complete resolution of signs and symptoms has rarely resulted in repeated severe cytokine release syndrome.

Patients with a high tumour burden or with a high number (≥ 25 x 10^9/L) of circulating malignant cells such as patients with CLL, who may be at higher risk of especially severe cytokine release syndrome, should be treated with extreme caution. These patients should be very closely monitored throughout the first infusion. Consideration should be given to the use of a reduced infusion rate for the first infusion in these patients or a split dosing over two days during the first cycle and any subsequent cycles if the lymphocyte count is still > 25 x 10^9/L.

Infusion related adverse reactions of all kinds have been observed in 77% of patients treated with rituximab (including cytokine release syndrome accompanied by hypotension and bronchospasm in 10% of patients) see section 4.8. These symptoms are usually reversible with interruption of rituximab infusion and administration of an anti-pyretic, an antihistaminic, and, occasionally, oxygen, intravenous saline or bronchodilators, and glucocorticoids if required. Please see cytokine release syndrome above for severe reactions.

Anaphylactic and other hypersensitivity reactions have been reported following the intravenous administration of proteins to patients. In contrast to cytokine release syndrome, true hypersensitivity reactions typically occur within minutes after starting infusion. Medicinal products for the treatment of hypersensitivity reactions, e.g., epinephrine (adrenaline), antihistamines and glucocorticoids, should be available for immediate use in the event of an allergic reaction during administration of rituximab. Clinical manifestations of anaphylaxis may appear similar to clinical manifestations of the cytokine release syndrome (described above). Reactions attributed to hypersensitivity have been reported less frequently than those attributed to cytokine release.

Additional reactions reported in some cases were myocardial infarction, atrial fibrillation, pulmonary oedema and acute reversible thrombocytopenia.

Since hypotension may occur during rituximab administration, consideration should be given to withholding anti-hypertensive medicines 12 hours prior to the Rixathon infusion.

Cardiac disorders
Angina pectoris, cardiac arrhythmias such as atrial flutter and fibrillation, heart failure and/or myocardial infarction have occurred in patients treated with rituximab. Therefore patients with a history of cardiac disease and/or cardiotoxic chemotherapy should be monitored closely.

Haematological toxicities
Although rituximab is not myelosuppressive in monotherapy, caution should be exercised when considering treatment of patients with neutrophils < 1.5 x 10^9/L and/or platelet counts < 75 x 10^9/L as clinical experience in this population is limited. Rituximab has been used in 21 patients who underwent autologous bone marrow transplantation and other risk groups with a presumable reduced bone marrow function without inducing myelotoxicity.

Regular full blood counts, including neutrophil and platelet counts, should be performed during Rixathon therapy.

Infections
Serious infections, including fatalities, can occur during therapy with rituximab (see section 4.8). Rixathon should not be administered to patients with an active, severe infection (e.g. tuberculosis, sepsis and opportunistic infections, see section 4.3).

Physicians should exercise caution when considering the use of Rixathon in patients with a history of recurring or chronic infections or with underlying conditions which may further predispose patients to serious infection (see section 4.8).

Cases of hepatitis B reactivation have been reported in subjects receiving rituximab including fulminant hepatitis with fatal outcome. The majority of these subjects were also exposed to cytotoxic chemotherapy. Limited information from one study in relapsed/refractory CLL patients suggests that rituximab treatment may also worsen the outcome of primary hepatitis B infections. Hepatitis B virus (HBV) screening should be performed in all patients before initiation of treatment with Rixathon. At minimum this should include HBsAg-status and HBcAb-status. These can be complemented with other appropriate markers as per local guidelines. Patients with active hepatitis B disease should not be treated with Rixathon. Patients with positive hepatitis B serology (either HBsAg or HBcAb) should consult liver disease experts before start of treatment and should be monitored and managed following local medical standards to prevent hepatitis B reactivation.

Very rare cases of progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) have been reported during postmarketing use of rituximab in NHL and CLL (see section 4.8). The majority of patients had received rituximab in combination with chemotherapy or as part of a hematopoietic stem cell transplant.

Cases of enteroviral meningoencephalitis including fatalities have been reported following use of rituximab.

False negative serologic testing of infections
Due to the risk of false negative serologic testing of infections, alternative diagnostic tools should be considered in case of patients presenting with symptoms indicative of rare infectious disease e.g. West Nile virus and neuroborreliosis.

Immunisations
The safety of immunisation with live viral vaccines, following rituximab therapy has not been studied for NHL and CLL patients and vaccination with live virus vaccines is not recommended. Patients treated with Rixathon may receive non-live vaccinations. However with non-live vaccines response rates may be reduced. In a non-randomised study, patients with relapsed low-grade NHL who received rituximab monotherapy when compared to healthy untreated controls had a lower rate of response to vaccination with tetanus recall antigen (16% vs. 81%) and Keyhole Limpet Haemocyanin (KLH) neoantigen (4% vs. 76% when assessed for >2-fold increase in antibody titer). For CLL patients similar results are assumable considering similarities between both diseases but that has not been investigated in clinical trials.

Mean pre-therapeutic antibody titres against a panel of antigens (Streptococcus pneumoniae, influenza A, mumps, rubella, varicella) were maintained for at least 6 months after treatment with rituximab.

Skin reactions
Severe skin reactions such as Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (Lyell's syndrome) and Stevens-Johnson syndrome, some with fatal outcome, have been reported (see section 4.8). In case of such an event, with a suspected relationship to rituximab, treatment should be permanently discontinued.

Rheumatoid arthritis, granulomatosis with polyangiitis, microscopic polyangiitis and pemphigus vulgaris

Methotrexate (MTX) naïve populations with rheumatoid arthritis
The use of Rituximab is not recommended in MTX-naïve patients since a favourable benefit risk relationship has not been established.

Infusion related reactions
Rituximab is associated with infusion related reactions (IRRs), which may be related to release of cytokines and/or other chemical mediators.

Severe IRRs with fatal outcome have been reported in rheumatoid arthritis patients in the postmarketing setting. In rheumatoid arthritis most infusion-related events reported in clinical trials were mild to moderate in severity. The most common symptoms were allergic reactions like headache, pruritus, throat irritation, flushing, rash, urticaria, hypertension, and pyrexia. In general, the proportion of patients experiencing any infusion reaction was higher following the first infusion than following the second infusion of any treatment course. The incidence of IRR decreased with subsequent courses (see section 4.8). The reactions reported were usually reversible with a reduction in rate, or interruption, of rituximab infusion and administration of an anti-pyretic, an antihistamine, and, occasionally, oxygen, intravenous saline or bronchodilators, and glucocorticoids if required. Closely monitor patients with pre-existing cardiac conditions and those who experienced prior cardiopulmonary adverse reactions. Depending on the severity of the IRR and the required interventions, temporarily or permanently discontinue Rixathon. In most cases, the infusion can be resumed at a 50% reduction in rate (e.g. from 100 mg/h to 50 mg/h) when symptoms have completely resolved.

Medicinal products for the treatment of hypersensitivity reactions, e.g. epinephrine (adrenaline), antihistamines and glucocorticoids, should be available for immediate use in the event of an allergic reaction during administration of Rixathon.

There are no data on the safety of rituximab in patients with moderate heart failure (NYHA class III) or severe, uncontrolled cardiovascular disease. In patients treated with rituximab, the occurrence of pre-existing ischemic cardiac conditions becoming symptomatic, such as angina pectoris, has been observed, as well as atrial fibrillation and flutter. Therefore, in patients with a known cardiac history, and those who experienced prior cardiopulmonary adverse reactions, the risk of cardiovascular complications resulting from infusion reactions should be considered before treatment with Rixathon and patients closely monitored during administration. Since hypotension may occur during rituximab infusion, consideration should be given to withholding anti-hypertensive medications 12 hours prior to the Rixathon infusion.

IRRs in patients with GPA, MPA and pemphigus vulgaris were consistent with those seen for rheumatoid arthritis patients in clinical trials and in the postmarketing setting (see section 4.8).

Cardiac disorders
Angina pectoris, cardiac arrhythmias such as atrial flutter and fibrillation, heart failure and/or myocardial infarction have occurred in patients treated with rituximab. Therefore patients with a history of cardiac disease should be monitored closely (see Infusion related reactions, above).

Infections
Based on the mechanism of action of rituximab and the knowledge that B cells play an important role in maintaining normal immune response, patients have an increased risk of infection following rituximab therapy (see section 5.1). Serious infections, including fatalities, can occur during therapy with rituximab (see section 4.8). Rixathon should not be administered to patients with an active, severe infection (e.g. tuberculosis, sepsis and opportunistic infections, see section 4.3) or severely immunocompromised patients (e.g. where levels of CD4 or CD8 are very low). Physicians should exercise caution when considering the use of rituximab in patients with a history of recurring or chronic infections or with underlying conditions which may further predispose patients to serious infection, e.g. hypogammaglobulinaemia (see section 4.8). It is recommended that immunoglobulin levels are determined prior to initiating treatment with Rixathon.

Patients reporting signs and symptoms of infection following Rixathon therapy should be promptly evaluated and treated appropriately. Before giving a subsequent course of Rixathon treatment, patients should be re-evaluated for any potential risk for infections.

Very rare cases of fatal progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) have been reported following use of rituximab for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and autoimmune diseases including Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) and vasculitis.

Cases of enteroviral meningoencephalitis including fatalities have been reported following use of rituximab.

False negative serologic testing of infections
Due to the risk of false negative serologic testing of infections, alternative diagnostic tools should be considered in case of patients presenting with symptoms indicative of rare infectious disease e.g. West Nile virus and neuroborreliosis.

Hepatitis B Infections
Cases of hepatitis B reactivation, including those with a fatal outcome, have been reported in rheumatoid arthritis, granulomatosis with polyangiitis and microscopic polyangiitis and other patients receiving rituximab.

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) screening should be performed in all patients before initiation of treatment with Rixathon. At minimum this should include HBsAg-status and HBcAb-status. These can be complemented with other appropriate markers as per local guidelines. Patients with active hepatitis B disease should not be treated with rituximab. Patients with positive hepatitis B serology (either HBsAg or HBcAb) should consult liver disease experts before start of treatment and should be monitored and managed following local medical standards to prevent hepatitis B reactivation.

Late neutropenia
Measure blood neutrophils prior to each course of Rixathon, and regularly up to 6-months after cessation of treatment, and upon signs or symptoms of infection (see section 4.8).

Skin reactions
Severe skin reactions such as Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (Lyell's syndrome) and Stevens-Johnson syndrome, some with fatal outcome, have been reported (see section 4.8). In case of such an event with a suspected relationship to Rixathon, treatment should be permanently discontinued.

Immunisation
Physicians should review the patient's vaccination status and patients should, if possible, be brought up-to-date with all immunisations in agreement with current immunisation guidelines prior to initiating Rixathon therapy. Vaccination should be completed at least 4 weeks prior to first administration of Rixathon.

The safety of immunisation with live viral vaccines following rituximab therapy has not been studied. Therefore vaccination with live virus vaccines is not recommended whilst on Rixathon or whilst peripherally B cell depleted.

Patients treated with Rixathon may receive non-live vaccinations. However, response rates to non-live vaccines may be reduced. In a randomised trial, patients with rheumatoid arthritis treated with rituximab and methotrexate had comparable response rates to tetanus recall antigen (39% vs. 42%), reduced rates to pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (43% vs. 82% to at least 2 pneumococcal antibody serotypes), and KLH neoantigen (47% vs. 93%), when given 6 months after rituximab as compared to patients only receiving methotrexate. Should non-live vaccinations be required whilst receiving rituximab therapy, these should be completed at least 4 weeks prior to commencing the next course of rituximab.

In the overall experience of rituximab repeat treatment over one year in rheumatoid arthritis, the proportions of patients with positive antibody titers against S. pneumoniae, influenza, mumps, rubella, varicella and tetanus toxoid were generally similar to the proportions at baseline.

Concomitant/sequential use of other DMARDs in rheumatoid arthritis
The concomitant use of Rixathon and anti-rheumatic therapies other than those specified under the rheumatoid arthritis indication and posology is not recommended.
There are limited data from clinical trials to fully assess the safety of the sequential use of other DMARDs (including TNF inhibitors and other biologics) following rituximab (see section 4.5). The available data indicate that the rate of clinically relevant infection is unchanged when such therapies are used in patients previously treated with rituximab, however patients should be closely observed for signs of infection if biologic agents and/or DMARDs are used following rituximab therapy.

Malignancy
Immunomodulatory medicinal products may increase the risk of malignancy. However, available data do not suggest an increased risk of malignancy for rituximab used in autoimmune indications beyond the malignancy risk already associated with the underlying autoimmune condition.

Excipients: This medicinal product contains 2.3 mmol (or 52.6 mg) sodium per 10 mL vial and 11.5 mmol (or 263.2 mg) sodium per 50 mL vial. To be taken into consideration by patients on a controlled sodium diet.

4.5 Interaction with other medicinal products and other forms of interaction

Currently, there are limited data on possible drug interactions with rituximab.

In CLL patients, co-administration with rituximab did not appear to have an effect on the pharmacokinetics of fludarabine or cyclophosphamide. In addition, there was no apparent effect of fludarabine and cyclophosphamide on the pharmacokinetics of rituximab.

Co-administration with methotrexate had no effect on the pharmacokinetics of rituximab in rheumatoid arthritis patients.

Patients with human anti-mouse antibody (HAMA) or anti-drug antibody (ADA) titres may have allergic or hypersensitivity reactions when treated with other diagnostic or therapeutic monoclonal antibodies.

In patients with rheumatoid arthritis, 283 patients received subsequent therapy with a biologic DMARD following rituximab. In these patients the rate of clinically relevant infection while on rituximab was 6.01 per 100 patient years compared to 4.97 per 100 patient years following treatment with the biologic DMARD.

4.6 Fertility, pregnancy and lactation

Contraception in males and females
Due to the long retention time of rituximab in B cell depleted patients, women of childbearing potential should use effective contraceptive methods during and for 12 months following treatment with Rixathon.

Pregnancy
IgG immunoglobulins are known to cross the placental barrier.

B cell levels in human neonates following maternal exposure to rituximab have not been studied in clinical trials. There are no adequate and well-controlled data from studies in pregnant women, however transient B-cell depletion and lymphocytopenia have been reported in some infants born to mothers exposed to rituximab during pregnancy. Similar effects have been observed in animal studies (see section 5.3). For these reasons Rixathon should not be administered to pregnant women unless the possible benefit outweighs the potential risk.

Breast-feeding
Limited data on rituximab excretion into breast milk suggest very low rituximab concentration in milk (relative infant dose less than 0.4%). Few cases of follow-up of breastfed infants describe normal growth and development up to 2 years. However, as these data are limited and the long-term outcomes of breastfed infants remain unknown, breastfeeding is not recommended while being treated with rituximab and optimally for 6 months following rituximab treatment.

Fertility
Animal studies did not reveal deleterious effects of rituximab on reproductive organs.

4.7 Effects on ability to drive and use machines

No studies on the effects of Rixathon on the ability to drive and use machines have been performed, although the pharmacological activity and adverse reactions reported to date suggest that Rixathon would have no or negligible influence on the ability to drive and use machines.

4.8 Undesirable effects

Experience from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia
Summary of the safety profile
The overall safety profile of rituximab in non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and CLL is based on data from patients from clinical trials and from postmarketing surveillance. These patients were treated either with rituximab monotherapy (as induction treatment or maintenance treatment following induction treatment) or in combination with chemotherapy.

The most frequently observed adverse drug reactions (ADRs) in patients receiving rituximab were IRRs which occurred in the majority of patients during the first infusion. The incidence of infusion- related symptoms decreases substantially with subsequent infusions and is less than 1% after eight doses of rituximab.

Infectious events (predominantly bacterial and viral) occurred in approximately 30-55% of patients during clinical trials in patients with NHL and in 30-50% of patients during clinical trials in patients with CLL.

The most frequently reported or observed serious adverse drug reactions were:
- IRRs (including cytokine-release syndrome, tumour-lysis syndrome), see section 4.4.
- Infections, see section 4.4.
- Cardiovascular events, see section 4.4.

Other serious ADRs reported include hepatitis B reactivation and PML (see section 4.4.).

Tabulated list of adverse reactions
The frequencies of ADRs reported with rituximab alone or in combination with chemotherapy are summarised in Table 1. Within each frequency grouping, undesirable effects are presented in order of decreasing seriousness. Frequencies are defined as very common (≥ 1/10), common (≥ 1/100 to < 1/10), uncommon (≥ 1/1,000 to < 1/100), rare (≥ 1/10,000 to < 1/1000), very rare (< 1/10,000) and not known (cannot be estimated from the available data). Within each frequency grouping, undesirable effects are presented in the order of decreasing seriousness.

The ADRs identified only during postmarketing surveillance, and for which a frequency could not be estimated, are listed under "not known".

Table 1 ADRs reported in clinical trials or during postmarketing surveillance in patients with NHL and CLL disease treated with rituximab monotherapy/maintenance or in combination with chemotherapy

System Organ Class	Very Common	Common	Uncommon	Rare	Very Rare	Not known
Infections and infestations	bacterial infections, viral infections, +bronchitis	sepsis, +pneumonia, +febrile infection, +herpes zoster, +respiratory tract infection, fungal infections, infections of unknown aetiology, +acute bronchitis, +sinusitis, hepatitis B[1]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

[illegible]

Artwork Service Provider: DOR
Artwork creator: Nurit Assayag
Creation date: 31/07/2024
Proof No.: 1
Artwork Order No.: 300095472
AW identifier No. New: 46345469-IL
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Artwork Order description: NV RIXATHON LIVI IL
Packaging site: PS, SI, LJUBLJANA (ASEPTICS), SANDOZ STO
Dimension: 1010 x 520 mm
Tech. Drawing No.: Rituximab_SI03_NAFS_v9
Printing colours: Black
Technical colours: Cutting
Live text: ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Both
Condensed font: ☐ Yes ☒ No
Font type: Arial
Pharma code: NA
Minimum font size body text: 7.5 pt
Variable data prefixes font size: NA
Print enhancements: NA
Braille: NA
! PLEASE TURN OVERPRINTING ON !

Description of selected adverse drug reactions

Infusion related reactions

In GPA/MPA Study 1 (adult induction of remission study), IRRs were defined as any adverse event occurring within 24 hours of an infusion and considered to be infusion-related by investigators in the safety population. Of the 99 patients treated with rituximab and 12 (12%) experienced at least one IRR. All IRRs were CTC Grade 1 or 2. The most common IRRs included cytokine release syndrome, flushing, throat irritation, and tremor. Rituximab was given in combination with intravenous glucocorticoids which may reduce the incidence and severity of these events.

In GPA/MPA Study 2 (adult maintenance study),7/57 (12%) patients in the rituximab arm experienced at least one infusion-related reaction. The incidence of IRR symptoms was highest during or after the first infusion (9%) and decreased with subsequent infusions (< 4%). All IRR symptoms were mild or moderate and most of them were reported from the SOCs Respiratory, Thoracic and Mediastinal Disorders and Skin and Subcutaneous Tissue disorders.

Infections

In GPA/MPA Study 1, the overall rate of infection was approximately 237 per 100 patient years (95% CI 197 - 285) at the 6-month primary endpoint. Infections were predominately mild to moderate and consisted mostly of upper respiratory tract infections, herpes zoster and urinary tract infections.

The rate of serious infections was approximately 25 per 100 patient years. The most frequently reported serious infection in the rituximab group was pneumonia at a frequency of 4%.

In GPA/MPA Study 2, 30/57 (53%) patients in the rituximab arm experienced infections. The incidence of all grade infections was similar between the arms. Infections were predominately mild to moderate. The most common infections in the rituximab arm included upper respiratory tract infections, gastroenteritis, urinary tract infections and herpes zoster. The incidence of serious infections was similar in both arms (approximately 12%). The most commonly reported serious infection in the rituximab group was mild or moderate bronchitis.

In the postmarketing setting, serious viral infections have been reported in GPA/MPA patients treated with rituximab.

Malignancies

In GPA/MPA Study 1, the incidence of malignancy in rituximab treated patients in the granulomatosis with polyangiitis and microscopic polyangiitis clinical study was 2.00 per 100 patient years at the study common closing date (when the final patient had completed the follow-up period). On the basis of standardized incidence ratios, the incidence of malignancies appears to be similar to that previously reported in patients with ANCA-associated vasculitis.

Cardiovascular adverse reactions

In GPA/MPA Study 1, cardiac events occurred at a rate of approximately 273 per 100 patient years (95% CI 149 - 470) at the 6-month primary endpoint. The rate of serious cardiac events was 2.1 per 100 patient years (95% CI 3 - 15). The most frequently reported events were tachycardia (4%) and atrial fibrillation (3%) (see section 4.4).

Neurologic events

Cases of posterior reversible encephalopathy syndrome (PRES)/reversible posterior leukoencephalopathy syndrome (RPLS) have been reported in autoimmune conditions. Signs and symptoms included visual disturbance, headache, seizures and altered mental status, with or without associated hypertension. A diagnosis of PRES/RPLS requires confirmation by brain imaging. The reported cases had recognised risk factors for PRES/RPLS, including the patients' underlying disease, hypertension, immunosuppressive therapy and/or chemotherapy.

Hepatitis-B reactivation

A small number of cases of hepatitis-B reactivation, some with fatal outcome, have been reported in GPA and MPA patients receiving rituximab in the postmarketing setting.

Hypogammaglobulinaemia

Hypogammaglobulinaemia (IgA, IgG or IgM below the lower limit of normal) has been observed in GPA and MPA patients treated with rituximab.

In GPA/MPA Study 1, at 6 months, in the rituximab group, 27%, 58% and 51% of patients with normal immunoglobulin levels at baseline, had low IgA, IgG and IgM levels, respectively compared to 25%, 50% and 46% in the cyclophosphamide group. The rate of overall infections and serious infections was not increased after the development of low IgA, IgG or IgM.

In GPA/MPA Study 2, no clinically meaningful differences between the two treatment arms or decreases in total immunoglobulin, IgG, IgM or IgA levels were observed throughout the trial.

Neutropenia

In GPA/MPA Study 1, 24% of patients in the rituximab group (single course) and 23% of patients in the cyclophosphamide group developed CTC grade 3 or greater neutropenia. Neutropenia was not associated with an observed increase in serious infection in rituximab-treated patients.

In GPA/MPA Study 2, the incidence of all-grade neutropenia was 0% for rituximab- treated patients vs 5% for azathioprine treated patients.

Skin and subcutaneous tissue disorders

Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (Lyell's syndrome) and Stevens-Johnson syndrome, some with fatal outcome, have been reported very rarely.

Experience from pemphigus vulgaris

Summary of the safety profile in PV Study 1 (Study ML22196) and PV Study 2 (Study WA29330)

The safety profile of rituximab in combination with short-term, low-dose glucocorticoids in the treatment of patients with pemphigus vulgaris was studied in a Phase 3, randomised, controlled, multicenter, open-label study in pemphigus patients that included 38 pemphigus vulgaris (PV) patients randomised to the rituximab group (PV Study 1). Patients randomised to the rituximab group received an initial 1000 mg IV on Study Day 1 and a second 1000 mg IV on Study Day 15. Maintenance doses of 500 mg IV were administered at months 12 and 18. Patients could receive 1000 mg IV at the time of relapse (see section 5.1).

In PV Study 2, a randomized, double-blind, double-dummy, active-comparator, multicenter study evaluating the efficacy and safety of rituximab compared with mycophenolate mofetil (MMF) in patients with moderate-to-severe PV requiring oral corticosteroids, 67 PV patients received treatment with rituximab (initial 1000 mg IV on Study Day 1 and a second 1000 mg IV on Study Day 15 repeated at Weeks 24 and 26) for up to 52 weeks (see section 5.1).

The safety profile of rituximab in PV was consistent with the established safety profile in other approved autoimmune indications.

Tabulated list of adverse reactions for PV Studies 1 and 2

Adverse reactions from PV Studies 1 and 2 are presented in Table 5. In PV Study 1, ADRs were defined as adverse events which occurred at a rate of ≥ 5% among rituximab-treated PV patients, with a ≥ 2% absolute difference in incidence between the rituximab-treated group and the standard-dose prednisone group up to month 24. No patients were withdrawn due to ADRs in Study 1. In PV Study 2, ADRs were defined as adverse events occurring in ≥ 5% of patients in the rituximab arm and assessed as related.

Table 5 Adverse reactions in rituximab-treated pemphigus vulgaris patients in PV Study 1 (up to month 24) and PV Study 2 (up to Week 52), or during postmarketing surveillance

MedDRA System Organ Class	Very Common	Common	Not known
Infections and infestations	Upper respiratory tract infection	Herpes virus infection Herpes zoster Oral herpes Conjunctivitis Nasopharyngitis Oral candidiasis Urinary tract infection	Serious viral infection[1,2] Enteroviral meningoencephalitis[1]
Neoplasms Benign, Malignant and Unspecified (incl cysts and polyps)		Skin papilloma	
Psychiatric disorders	Persistent depressive disorder	Major depression Irritability	
Nervous system disorders	Headache	Dizziness	
Cardiac disorders		Tachycardia	
Gastrointestinal disorders		Abdominal pain upper	
Skin and subcutaneous tissue disorders	Alopecia	Pruritus Urticaria Skin disorder	
Musculoskeletal, connective tissue and bone disorders		Musculoskeletal pain Arthralgia Back pain	
General disorders and administration site conditions		Fatigue Asthenia Pyrexia	
Injury, Poisoning and Procedural Complications	Infusion-related reactions[2]		

[1]Observed during postmarketing surveillance. See also section infections below.
[2]See also section infections below
[3]Infusion-related reactions for PV Study 1 included symptoms collected on the next scheduled visit after each infusion, and adverse events occurring on the day of or one day after the infusion. The most common infusion-related reaction symptoms/Preferred Terms for PV Study 1 included headaches, chills, high blood pressure, nausea, asthenia and pain.

The most common infusion-related reaction symptoms/Preferred Terms for PV Study 2 were dyspnea, erythema, hyperhidrosis, flushing/hot flush, hypotension/low blood pressure and rash/rash pruritic.

Description of selected adverse reactions

Infusion-related reactions

In PV Study 1, infusion-related reactions were common (58%). Nearly all infusion-related reactions were mild to moderate. The proportion of patients experiencing an infusion-related reaction was 29% (11 patients), 40% (15 patients), 13% (5 patients), and 10% (4 patients) following the first, second, third, and fourth infusions, respectively. No patients were withdrawn from treatment due to infusion-related reactions. Symptoms of infusion-related reactions were similar in type and severity to those seen in RA and GPA/MPA patients.

In PV Study 2, IRRs occurred primarily at the first infusion and the frequency of IRRs decreased with subsequent infusions: 17.9%, 4.5%, 3% and 3% of patients experienced IRRs at the first, second, third, and fourth infusions, respectively. In 11/15 patients who experienced at least one IRR, the IRRs were Grade 1 or 2. In 4/15 patients, Grade ≥ 3 IRRs were reported and led to discontinuation of rituximab treatment; three of the four patients experienced serious (life-threatening) IRRs. Serious IRRs occurred at the first (2 patients) or second (1 patient) infusion and resolved with symptomatic treatment.

Infections

In PV Study 1, 14 (37%) in the rituximab group experienced treatment-related infections compared to 15 patients (42%) in the standard-dose prednisone group. The most common infections in the rituximab group were herpes simplex and zoster infections, bronchitis, urinary tract infection, fungal infection and conjunctivitis. Three patients (8%) in the rituximab group experienced a total of 5 serious infections (Pneumocystis jirovecii pneumonia, infective thrombosis, intervertebral discitis, lung infection, Staphylococcal sepsis) and one patient (3%) in the standard-dose prednisone group experienced a serious infection (Pneumocystis jirovecii pneumonia).

In PV Study 2, 42 patients (62.7%) in the rituximab arm experienced infections. The most common infections in the rituximab group were upper respiratory tract infection, nasopharyngitis, oral candidiasis and urinary tract infection. Six patients (9%) in the rituximab arm experienced serious infections.

In the postmarketing setting, serious viral infections have been reported in PV patients treated with rituximab.

Laboratory abnormalities

In PV Study 2, in the rituximab arm, transient decreases in lymphocyte count, driven by decreases in the peripheral T-cell populations, as well as a transient decrease in phosphorus level were very commonly observed post-infusion. These were considered to be induced by IV methylprednisolone premedication infusion.

In PV Study 2, low IgG levels were commonly observed and low IgM levels were very commonly observed; however, there was no evidence of an increased risk of serious infections after the development of low IgG or IgM.

Reporting of suspected adverse reactions

Reporting suspected adverse reactions after authorisation of the medicinal product is important. It allows continued monitoring of the benefit/risk balance of the medicinal product.

Any suspected adverse events should be reported to the Ministry of Health according to the National Regulation by using an online form https://sideeffects.health.gov.il

4.9 Overdose

Limited experience with doses higher than the approved dose of intravenous rituximab formulation is available from clinical trials in humans. The highest intravenous dose of rituximab tested in humans to date is 5000 mg (2250 mg/m²), tested in a dose escalation study in patients with CLL. No additional safety signals were identified.

Patients who experience overdose should have immediate interruption of their infusion and be closely monitored.

In the postmarketing setting five cases of rituximab overdose have been reported. Three cases had no reported adverse event. The two adverse events that were reported were flu-like symptoms, with a dose of 1.8 g of rituximab and fatal respiratory failure, with a dose of 2 g of rituximab.

5. PHARMACOLOGICAL PROPERTIES

5.1 Pharmacodynamic properties

Pharmacotherapeutic group: antineoplastic agents, monoclonal antibodies, ATC code: L01X C02

Rixathon is a biosimilar medicinal product, that has been demonstrated to be similar in quality, safety and efficacy to the reference medicinal product MabThera. More detailed information is available on the website of the Ministry of Health http://www.health.gov.il/hozer/dr_127.pdf

Rituximab binds specifically to the transmembrane antigen, CD20, a non-glycosylated phosphoprotein, located on pre-B and mature B lymphocytes. The antigen is expressed on > 95% of all B cell non-Hodgkin's lymphomas.

CD20 is found on both normal and malignant B cells, but not on haematopoietic stem cells, pro-B cells, normal plasma cells or other normal tissue. This antigen does not internalise upon antibody binding and is not shed from the cell surface. CD20 does not circulate in the plasma as a free antigen and, thus, does not compete for antibody binding.

The Fab domain of rituximab binds to the CD20 antigen on B lymphocytes and the Fc domain can recruit immune effector functions to mediate B cell lysis. Possible mechanisms of effector-mediated cell lysis include complement-dependent cytotoxicity (CDC) resulting from C1q binding, and antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) mediated by one or more of the Fcγ receptors on the surface of granulocytes, macrophages and NK cells. Rituximab binding to CD20 antigen on B lymphocytes has also been demonstrated to induce cell death via apoptosis.

Peripheral B cell counts declined below normal following completion of the first dose of rituximab. In patients treated for haematological malignancies, B cell recovery began within 6 months of treatment and generally returned to normal levels within 12 months after completion of therapy, although in some patients this may take longer (up to a median recovery time of 23 months post-induction therapy). In rheumatoid arthritis patients, immediate depletion of B cells in the peripheral blood was observed following two infusions of 1000 mg rituximab separated by a 14 day interval. Peripheral blood B cell counts begin to increase from week 24 and evidence for repopulation is observed in the majority of patients by week 40, whether rituximab was administered as monotherapy or in combination with methotrexate. A small proportion of patients had prolonged peripheral B cell depletion lasting 2 years or more after their last dose of rituximab. In patients with granulomatosis with polyangiitis or microscopic polyangiitis, the number of peripheral blood B cells decreased to < 10 cells/μL after two weekly infusions of rituximab 375 mg/m², and remained at that level in most patients up to the 6 month timepoint. The majority of patients (81%) showed signs of B cell return, with counts > 10 cells/μL by month 12, increasing to 87% of patients by month 18.

Clinical experience in Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and in chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

Follicular lymphoma

Monotherapy

Initial treatment, weekly for 4 doses

In the pivotal trial, 166 patients with relapsed or chemoresistant low-grade or follicular B cell NHL received 375 mg/m² of rituximab as an intravenous infusion once weekly for four weeks. The overall response rate (ORR) in the intent-to-treat (ITT) population was 48% (CI_{95}% 41% - 56%) with a 6% complete response (CR) and a 42% partial response (PR) rate. The projected median time to progression (TTP) for responding patients was 13.0 months. In a subgroup analysis, the ORR was higher in patients with IWF B, C, and D histological subtypes as compared to IWF A subtype (58% vs. 12%), higher in patients whose largest lesion was < 5 cm vs. > 7 cm in greatest diameter (53% vs. 38%), and higher in patients with chemosensitive relapse as compared to chemoresistant (defined as duration of response < 3 months) relapse (50% vs. 22%). ORR in patients previously treated with autologous bone marrow transplant (ABMT) was 78% versus 43% in patients with no ABMT. Neither age, sex, lymphoma grade, initial diagnosis, presence or absence of bulky disease, normal or high LDH nor presence of extranodal disease had a statistically significant effect (Fisher's exact test) on response to rituximab. A statistically significant correlation was noted between response rates and bone marrow involvement. 40% of patients with bone marrow involvement responded compared to 59% of patients with no bone marrow involvement (p=0.0186). This finding was not supported by a stepwise logistic regression analysis in which the following factors were identified as prognostic factors: histological type, bcl-2 positivity at baseline, resistance to last chemotherapy and bulky disease.

Initial treatment, weekly for 8 doses

In a multi-centre, single-arm trial, 37 patients with relapsed or chemoresistant, low grade or follicular B cell NHL received 375 mg/m² of rituximab as intravenous infusion weekly for eight doses. The ORR was 57% (95% Confidence interval (CI); 41% – 73%; CR 14%, PR 43%) with a projected median TTP for responding patients of 19.4 months (range 5.3 to 38.9 months).

Initial treatment, bulky disease, weekly for 4 doses

In pooled data from three trials, 39 patients with relapsed or chemoresistant, bulky disease (single lesion ≥ 10 cm in diameter), low grade or follicular B cell NHL received 375 mg/m² of rituximab as intravenous infusion weekly for four doses. The ORR was 36% (CI_{95}% 21% – 51%; CR 3%, PR 33%) with a median TTP for responding patients of 9.6 months (range 4.5 to 26.8 months).

Re-treatment, weekly for 4 doses

In a multi-centre, single-arm trial, 58 patients with relapsed or chemoresistant low grade or follicular B cell NHL, who had achieved an objective clinical response to a prior course of rituximab, were re- treated with 375 mg/m² of rituximab as intravenous infusion weekly for four doses. Three of the patients had received two courses of rituximab before enrolment and thus were given a third course in the study. Two patients were re-treated twice in the study. For the 60 re-treatments on study, the ORR was 38% (CI_{95}% 26% – 51%; 10% CR, 28% PR) with a projected median TTP for responding patients of 17.8 months (range 5.4 – 26.6). This compares favourably with the TTP achieved after the prior course of rituximab (12.4 months).

Initial treatment, in combination with chemotherapy

In an open-label randomised trial, a total of 322 previously untreated patients with follicular lymphoma were randomised to receive either CVP chemotherapy (cyclophosphamide 750 mg/m², vincristine 1.4 mg/m² up to a maximum of 2 mg on day 1, and prednisolone 40 mg/m²/day on days 1-5) every 3 weeks for 8 cycles or rituximab 375 mg/m² in combination with CVP (R-CVP).

Rituximab was administered on the first day of each treatment cycle. A total of 321 patients (162 R-CVP, 159 CVP) received therapy and were analysed for efficacy. The median follow up of patients was 53 months. R-CVP led to a significant benefit over CVP for the primary endpoint, time to treatment failure (27 months vs. 6.6 months, p < 0.0001, log-rank test). The proportion of patients with a tumour response (CR, CRu, PR) was significantly higher (p < 0.0001 Chi-Square test) in the R-CVP group (80.9%) than the CVP group (57.2%). Treatment with R-CVP significantly prolonged the time to disease progression or death compared to CVP, 33.6 months and 14.7 months, respectively (p < 0.0001, log-rank test). The median duration of response was 37.7 months in the R-CVP group and was 13.5 months in the CVP group (p < 0.0001, log-rank test).

The difference between the treatment groups with respect to overall survival showed a significant clinical difference (p=0.029, log-rank test stratified by centre): survival rates at 53 months were 80.9% for patients in the R-CVP group compared to 71.1% for patients in the CVP group.

Results from three other randomised trials using rituximab in combination with chemotherapy regimen other than CVP (CHOP, MCP, CHVP/Interferon-α) have also demonstrated significant improvements in response rates, time-dependent parameters as well as in overall survival. Key results from all four studies are summarized in table 6.

Table 6 Summary of key results from four phase III randomised studies evaluating the benefit of rituximab with different chemotherapy regimens in follicular lymphoma

Study	Treatment, N	Median FU, months	ORR, %	CR, %	Median TTF/PFS/ EFS mo	OS rates, %
M39021	CVP, 159 R-CVP, 162	53	57 81	10 41	Median TTP: 14.7 33.6 P < 0.0001	53-months 71.1 80.9 p = 0.029
GLSG'00	CHOP, 205 R-CHOP, 223	18	90 96	17 20	Median TTF: 2.6 years Not reached P < 0.001	18-months 90 95 p = 0.016
OSHO-39	MCP, 96 R-MCP, 105	47	75 92	25 50	Median PFS: 28.8 Not reached P < 0.0001	48-months 74 87 p = 0.0096
FL2000	CHVP-IFN, 183 R-CHVP- IFN, 175	42	85 94	49 76	Median EFS: 36 Not reached P < 0.0001	42-months 84 91 p = 0.029

EFS – Event Free Survival
TTP – Time to progression or death
PFS – Progression-Free Survival
TTF – Time to Treatment Failure
OS rates – survival rates at the time of the analyses

Maintenance therapy

Previously untreated follicular lymphoma

In a prospective, open label, international, multi-centre, phase III trial 1193 patients with previously untreated advanced follicular lymphoma received induction therapy with R-CHOP (n=881), R-CVP (n=268) or R-FCM (n=44), according to the investigators' choice. A total of 1078 patients responded to induction therapy, of which 1018 were randomised to rituximab maintenance therapy (n=505) or observation (n=513). The two treatment groups were well balanced with regards to baseline characteristics and disease status. Rituximab maintenance treatment consisted of a single infusion of rituximab at 375 mg/m² body surface area given every 2 months until disease progression or for a maximum period of two years.

The pre-specified primary analysis was conducted at a median observation time of 25 months from randomization, maintenance therapy with rituximab resulted in a clinically relevant and statistically significant improvement in the primary endpoint of investigator assessed progression-free survival (PFS) as compared to observation in patients with previously untreated follicular lymphoma (Table 7).

Significant benefit from maintenance treatment with rituximab was also seen for the secondary endpoints event-free survival (EFS), time to next anti-lymphoma treatment (TNLT) time to next chemotherapy (TNCT) and overall response rate (ORR) in the primary analysis (Table 7).

Data from extended follow-up of patients in the study (median follow-up 9 years) confirmed the long- term benefit of rituximab maintenance therapy in terms of PFS, EFS, TNLT and TNCT (Table 7).

Table 7 Overview of efficacy results for rituximab maintenance vs. observation at the protocol defined primary analysis and after 9 years median follow-up (final analysis)

	Primary analysis (median FU: 25 months)		Final analysis (median FU: 9.0 years)	
	Observation N=513	rituximab N=505	Observation N=513	rituximab N=505
Primary efficacy				
Progression-free survival (median)	NR	NR	4.06 years	10.49 years
log-rank p value	< 0.0001		< 0.0001	
hazard ratio (95% CI)	0.50 (0.39, 0.64)		0.61 (0.52, 0.73)	
risk reduction	50%		39%	
Secondary efficacy				
Overall survival (median)	NR	NR	NR	NR
log-rank p value	0.7246		0.7948	
hazard ratio (95% CI)	0.89 (0.45, 1.74)		1.04 (0.77, 1.40)	
risk reduction	11%		-6%	
Event-free survival (median)	38 months	NR	4.04 years	9.25 years
log-rank p value	< 0.0001		< 0.0001	
hazard ratio (95% CI)	0.54 (0.43, 0.69)		0.64 (0.54, 0.76)	
risk reduction	46%		36%	
TNLT (median)	NR	NR	6.11 years	NR
log-rank p value	0.0003		< 0.0001	
hazard ratio (95% CI)	0.61 (0.46, 0.80)		0.66 (0.55, 0.78)	
risk reduction	39%		34%	
TNCT (median)	NR	NR	9.32 years	NR
log-rank p value	0.0011		0.0004	
hazard ratio (95% CI)	0.60 (0.44, 0.82)		0.71 (0.59, 0.86)	
risk reduction	40%		39%	
Overall response rate*	55%	74%	61%	79%
chi-squared test p value	< 0.0001		< 0.0001	
odds ratio (95% CI)	2.33 (1.73, 3.15)		2.43 (1.84, 3.22)	
Complete response (CR/CRu) rate*	48%	67%	53%	67%
chi-squared test p value	< 0.0001		< 0.0001	
odds ratio (95% CI)	2.21 (1.65, 2.94)		2.34 (1.80, 3.03)	

* at end of maintenance/observation; final analysis results based on median follow-up of 73 months.

FU: follow-up; NR: not reached at time of clinical cut off, TNCT: time to next chemotherapy treatment; TNLT: time to next anti lymphoma treatment.

Rituximab maintenance treatment provided consistent benefit in all predefined subgroups tested: gender (male, female), age (< 60 years, >= 60 years), FLIPI score (<= 1, 2 or >= 3), induction therapy (R-CHOP, R-CVP or R-FCM) and regardless of the quality of response to induction treatment (CR,CRu or PR). Exploratory analyses of the benefit of maintenance treatment showed a less pronounced effect in elderly patients (> 70 years of age), however sample sizes were small.

Relapsed/Refractory follicular lymphoma

In a prospective, open label, international, multi-centre, phase III trial, 465 patients with relapsed/refractory follicular lymphoma were randomised in a first step to induction therapy with either CHOP (cyclophosphamide, doxorubicin, vincristine, prednisolone; n=231) or rituximab plus CHOP (R-CHOP, n=234). The two treatment groups were well balanced with regard to baseline characteristics and disease status. A total of 334 patients achieving a complete or partial remission following induction therapy were randomised in a second step to rituximab maintenance therapy (n=167) or observation (n=167). Rituximab maintenance treatment consisted of a single infusion of rituximab at 375 mg/m² body surface area given every 3 months until disease progression or for a maximum period of two years.

The final efficacy analysis included all patients randomised to both parts of the study. After a median observation time of 31 months for patients randomised to the induction phase, R-CHOP significantly improved the outcome of patients with relapsed/refractory follicular lymphoma when compared to CHOP (see Table 8).

Table 8 Induction phase: overview of efficacy results for CHOP vs. R-CHOP (31 months median observation time)

	CHOP	R-CHOP	p-value	Risk Reduction[1)]
Primary Efficacy				
ORR[2)]	74%	87%	0.0003	Na
CR[2)]	16%	29%	0.0005	Na
PR[2)]	58%	58%	0.9449	Na

[1)] Estimates were calculated by hazard ratios
[2)] Last tumour response as assessed by the investigator. The "primary" statistical test for "response" was the trend test of CR versus PR versus non-response (p < 0.0001)

Abbreviations: NA, not available; ORR: overall response rate; CR: complete response; PR: partial response

For patients randomised to the maintenance phase of the trial, the median observation time was 28 months from maintenance randomisation. Maintenance treatment with rituximab led to a clinically relevant and statistically significant improvement in the primary endpoint, PFS, (time from maintenance randomisation to relapse, disease progression or death) when compared to observation alone (p < 0.0001 log-rank test).The median PFS was 42.2 months in the rituximab maintenance arm compared to 14.3 months in the observation arm. Using a cox regression analysis, the risk of experiencing progressive disease or death was reduced by 61% with rituximab maintenance treatment when compared to observation (95% CI; 45%-72%). Kaplan-Meier estimated progression- free rates at 12 months were 78% in the rituximab maintenance group vs. 57% in the observation group. An analysis of overall survival confirmed the significant benefit of rituximab maintenance over observation (p=0.0039 log-rank test). Rituximab maintenance treatment reduced the risk of death by 56% (95% CI; 22%-75%).

Table 9 Maintenance phase: overview of efficacy results rituximab vs. observation (28 months median observation time)

Efficacy Parameter	Kaplan-Meier Estimate of Median Time to Event (Months)			Risk Reduction
	Observation (N=167)	rituximab (N=167)	Log-Rank p value	
Progression-free survival (PFS)	14.3	42.2	<0.0001	61%
Overall Survival	NR	NR	0.0039	56%
Time to new lymphoma treatment	20.1	38.8	<0.0001	50%
Disease-free survival[a]	16.5	53.7	0.0003	67%
Subgroup Analysis				
PFS				
CHOP	11.6	37.5	<0.0001	71%
R-CHOP	22.1	51.9	0.0071	46%
CR	14.3	52.8	0.0008	64%
PR	14.3	37.8	<0.0001	54%
OS				
CHOP	NR	NR	0.0348	55%
R-CHOP	NR	NR	0.0482	56%

NR: not reached; [a]: only applicable to patients achieving a CR

The benefit of rituximab maintenance treatment was confirmed in all subgroups analysed, regardless of induction regimen (CHOP or R-CHOP) or quality of response to induction treatment (CR or PR) (table 9). Rituximab maintenance treatment significantly prolonged median PFS in patients responding to CHOP induction therapy (median PFS 37.5 months vs. 11.6 months, p < 0.0001) as well as in those responding to R-CHOP induction (median PFS 51.9 months vs. 22.1 months, p=0.0071). Although subgroups were small, rituximab maintenance treatment provided a significant benefit in terms of overall survival for both patients responding to CHOP and patients responding to R-CHOP, although longer follow-up is required to confirm this observation.

Adult Diffuse large B cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

In a randomised, open-label trial, a total of 399 previously untreated elderly patients (age 60 to 80 years) with diffuse large B cell lymphoma received standard CHOP chemotherapy (cyclophosphamide 750 mg/m², doxorubicin 50 mg/m², vincristine 1.4 mg/m² up to a maximum of 2 mg on day 1, and prednisolone 40 mg/m²/day on days 1-5) every 3 weeks for eight cycles, or rituximab 375 mg/m² plus CHOP (R-CHOP). Rituximab was administered on the first day of the treatment cycle.

The final efficacy analysis included all randomised patients (197 CHOP, 202 R-CHOP), and had a median follow-up duration of approximately 31 months. The two treatment groups were well balanced in baseline disease characteristics and disease status. The final analysis confirmed that R-CHOP treatment was associated with a clinically relevant and statistically significant improvement in the duration of event-free survival (the primary efficacy parameter; where events were death, relapse or progression of lymphoma, or institution of a new anti-lymphoma treatment) (p=0.0001). Kaplan Meier estimates of the median duration of event-free survival were 35 months in the R-CHOP arm compared to 13 months in the CHOP arm, representing a risk reduction of 41%. At 24 months, estimates for overall survival were 68.2% in the R-CHOP arm compared to 57.4% in the CHOP arm. A subsequent analysis of the duration of overall survival, carried out with a median follow-up duration of 60 months, confirmed the benefit of R-CHOP over CHOP treatment (p=0.0071), representing a risk reduction of 32%.

The analysis of all secondary parameters (response rates, progression-free survival, disease-free survival, duration of response) verified the treatment effect of R-CHOP compared to CHOP. The complete response rate after cycle 8 was 76.2% in the R-CHOP group and 62.4% in the CHOP group (p=0.0028). The risk of disease progression was reduced by 46% and the risk of relapse by 51%.

In all patients subgroups (gender, age, age adjusted IPI, Ann Arbor stage, ECOG, β2 microglobulin, LDH, albumin, B symptoms, bulky disease, extranodal sites, bone marrow involvement), the risk ratios for event-free survival and overall survival (R-CHOP compared with CHOP) were less than 0.83 and 0.95 respectively. R-CHOP was associated with improvements in outcome for both high- and low-risk patients according to age adjusted IPI.

Clinical laboratory findings

Of 67 patients evaluated for human anti-mouse antibody (HAMA), no responses were noted. Of 356 patients evaluated for HACA, 1.1% (4 patients) were positive.

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

In two open-label randomised trials, a total of 817 previously untreated patients and 552 patients with relapsed/refractory CLL were randomised to receive either FC chemotherapy (fludarabine 25 mg/m², cyclophosphamide 250 mg/m², days 1-3) every 4 weeks for 6 cycles or rituximab in combination with FC (R-FC). Rituximab was administered at a dosage of 375 mg/m² during the first cycle one day prior to chemotherapy and at a dosage of 500 mg/m² on day 1 of each subsequent treatment cycle. Patients were excluded from the study in relapsed/refractory CLL if they had previously been treated with monoclonal antibodies or if they were refractory (defined as failure to achieve a partial remission for at least 6 months) to fludarabine or any nucleoside analogue. A total of 810 patients (403 R-FC, 407 FC) for the first-line study (Table 10a and Table 10b) and 552 patients (276 R-FC, 276 FC) for the relapsed/refractory study (Table 11) were analysed for efficacy.

In the first-line study, after a median observation time of 48.1 months, the median PFS was 55 months in the R-FC group and 33 months in the FC group (p < 0.0001, log-rank test). The analysis of overall survival showed a significant benefit of R-FC treatment over FC chemotherapy alone (p=0.0319, log- rank test) (Table 10a). The benefit in terms of PFS was consistently observed in most patient subgroups analysed according to disease risk at baseline (i.e. Binet stages A-C) (Table 10b).

Table 10a First-line treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia Overview of efficacy results for rituximab plus FC vs. FC alone - 48.1 months median observation time

Efficacy Parameter	Kaplan-Meier Estimate of Median Time to Event (Months)			Risk Reduction
	FC (N=409)	R-FC (N=408)	Log-Rank p value	
Progression-free survival (PFS)	32.8	55.3	<0.0001	45%
Overall Survival	NR	NR	0.0319	27%
Event Free Survival	31.3	51.8	<0.0001	44%
Response rate (CR, nPR, or PR)	72.6%	85.8%	<0.0001	n.a.
CR rates	16.9%	36.0%	<0.0001	n.a.
Duration of response*	36.2	57.3	<0.0001	44%
Disease free survival (DFS)**	48.9	60.3	0.0520	31%
Time to new treatment	47.2	69.7	<0.0001	42%

Response rate and CR rates analysed using Chi-squared Test. NR: not reached; n.a.: not applicable
*: only applicable to patients achieving a CR, nPR, PR
**: only applicable to patients achieving a CR

Table 10b First-line treatment of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia Hazard ratios of progression-free survival according to Binet stage (ITT) – 48.1 months median observation time

Progression-free survival (PFS)	Number of patients		Hazard Ratio (95% CI)	p-value (Wald test, not adjusted)
	FC	R-FC		
Binet stage A	22	18	0.39 (0.15; 0.98)	0.0442
Binet stage B	259	263	0.52 (0.41; 0.66)	<0.0001
Binet stage C	126	126	0.68 (0.49; 0.95)	0.0224

CI: Confidence Interval

In the relapsed/refractory study, the median progression-free survival (primary endpoint) was 30.6 months in the R-FC group and 20.6 months in the FC group (p=0.0002, log-rank test). The benefit in terms of PFS was observed in almost all patient subgroups analysed according to disease risk at baseline. A slight but not significant improvement in overall survival was reported in the R-FC compared to the FC arm.

Table 11 Treatment of relapsed/refractory chronic lymphocytic leukaemia - overview of efficacy results for rituximab plus FC vs. FC alone (25.3 months median observation time)

Efficacy Parameter	Kaplan-Meier Estimate of Median Time to Event (Months)			Risk Reduction
	FC (N=276)	R-FC (N=276)	Log-Rank p value	
Progression-free survival (PFS)	20.6	30.6	0.0002	35%
Overall Survival	51.9	NR	0.2874	17%
Event Free Survival	19.3	28.7	0.0002	36%
Response rate (CR, nPR, or PR)	58.0%	69.9%	0.0034	n.a.
CR rates	13.0%	24.3%	0.0007	n.a.
Duration of response *	27.6	39.6	0.0252	31%
Disease free survival (DFS)**	42.2	39.6	0.8842	-6%
Time to new CLL treatment	34.2	NR	0.0024	35%

Response rate and CR rates analysed using Chi-squared Test.
*: only applicable to patients achieving a CR, nPR, PR;
NR: not reached
n.a.: not applicable
**: only applicable to patients achieving a CR;

Results from other supportive studies using rituximab in combination with other chemotherapy regimens (including CHOP, FCM, PC, PCM, bendamustine and cladribine) for the treatment of previously untreated and/or relapsed/refractory CLL patients have also demonstrated high overall response rates with benefit in terms of PFS rates, albeit with modestly higher toxicity (especially myelotoxicity). These studies support the use of rituximab with any chemotherapy.

Data in approximately 180 patients pre-treated with rituximab have demonstrated clinical benefit (including CR) and are supportive for rituximab re-treatment.

Paediatric population

See Section 4.2 for information on paediatric use.

Clinical experience in rheumatoid arthritis

The efficacy and safety of rituximab in alleviating the symptoms and signs of rheumatoid arthritis in patients with an inadequate response to TNF-inhibitors was demonstrated in a pivotal randomised, controlled, double-blind, multicenter trial (Trial 1).

Trial 1 evaluated 517 patients that had experienced an inadequate response or intolerance to one or more TNF inhibitor therapies. Eligible patients had active rheumatoid arthritis, diagnosed according to the criteria of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR). Rituximab was administered as two IV infusions separated by an interval of 15 days. Patients received 2 x 1000 mg intravenous infusions of rituximab or placebo in combination with MTX. All patients received concomitant 60 mg oral prednisone on days 2-7 and 30 mg on days 8-14 following the first infusion. The primary endpoint was the proportion of patients who achieved an ACR20 response at week 24. Patients were followed beyond week 24 for long term endpoints, including radiographic assessment at 56 weeks and at 104 weeks. During this time, 81% of patients, from the original placebo group received rituximab between weeks 24 and 56, under an open label extension study protocol.

Trials of rituximab in patients with early arthritis (patients without prior methotrexate treatment and patients with an inadequate response to methotrexate, but not yet treated with TNF-alpha inhibitors) have met their primary endpoints. Rituximab is not indicated for these patients, since the safety data about long-term rituximab treatment are insufficient, in particular concerning the risk of development of malignancies and PML.

Disease activity outcomes

Rituximab in combination with methotrexate significantly increased the proportion of patients achieving at least a 20% improvement in ACR score compared with patients treated with methotrexate alone (Table 12). Across all development studies the treatment benefit was similar in patients independent of age, gender, body surface area, race, number of prior treatments or disease status.

Clinically and statistically significant improvement was also noted on all individual components of the ACR response (tender and swollen joint counts, patient and physician global assessment, disability index scores (HAQ), pain assessment and C-Reactive Proteins (mg/dL).

Table 12 Clinical response outcomes at primary endpoint in Trial 1(ITT population)

	Outcome†	Placebo+MTX	rituximab+MTX (2 x 1000 mg)
Trial 1		N = 201	N = 298
	ACR20	36 (18%)	153 (51%)***
	ACR50	11 (5%)	80 (27%)***
	ACR70	3 (1%)	37 (12%)***
	EULAR Response (Good/Moderate)	44 (22%)	193 (65%)***
	Mean Change in DAS	-0.34	-1.83***

† Outcome at 24 weeks
Significant difference from placebo + MTX at the primary timepoint: ***p ≤ 0.0001

Patients treated with rituximab in combination with methotrexate had a significantly greater reduction in disease activity score (DAS28) than patients treated with methotrexate alone (Table 11). Similarly, a good to moderate European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) response was achieved by significantly more rituximab treated patients treated with rituximab and methotrexate compared to patients treated with methotrexate alone (Table 12).

Radiographic response

Structural joint damage was assessed radiographically and expressed as change in modified Total Sharp Score (mTSS) and its components, the erosion score and joint space narrowing score.

In Trial 1, conducted in patients with inadequate response or intolerance to one or more TNF inhibitor therapies, receiving rituximab in combination with methotrexate demonstrated significantly less radiographic progression than patients originally receiving methotrexate alone at 56 weeks. Of the patients originally receiving methotrexate alone, 81% received rituximab either as rescue between weeks 16-24 or in the extension trial, before week 56. A higher proportion of patients receiving the original rituximab /MTX treatment also had no erosive progression over 56 weeks (Table 13).

Table 13 Radiographic outcomes at 1 year (mITT population)

	Placebo+MTX	rituximab+MTX *2 × 1000 mg*
Trial 1	(n = 184)	(n = 273)
Mean Change from Baseline:		
Modified Total Sharp score	2.30	1.01*
Erosion Score	1.32	0.60*
Joint Space narrowing score	0.98	0.41**
Proportion of patients with no radiographic change	46%	53%, NS
Proportion of patients with no erosive change	52%	60%, NS

150 patients originally randomised to placebo + MTX in Trial 1 received at least one course of RTX + MTX by one year
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.001. Abbreviation: NS, non significant

Inhibition of the rate of progressive joint damage was also observed long term. Radiographic analysis at 2 years in Trial 1 demonstrated significantly reduced progression of structural joint damage in patients receiving rituximab in combination with methotrexate compared to methotrexate alone as well as a significantly higher proportion of patients with no progression of joint damage over the 2 year period.

Physical function and quality of life outcomes

Significant reductions in disability index (HAQ-DI) and fatigue (FACIT-Fatigue) scores were observed in patients treated with rituximab compared to patients treated with methotrexate alone. The proportions of rituximab treated patients showing a minimal clinically important difference (MCID) in HAQ-DI (defined as an individual total score decrease of >0.22) was also higher than among patients receiving methotrexate alone (Table 14).

Significant improvement in health related quality of life was also demonstrated with significant improvement in both the physical health score (PHS) and mental health score (MHS) of the SF-36. Further, a significantly higher proportion of patients achieved MCIDs for these scores (Table 14).

Table 14 Physical function and quality of life outcomes at week 24 in Trial 1

Outcome†	Placebo+MTX	rituximab+MTX *(2 x 1000 mg)*
	n=201	n=298
Mean change in HAQ-DI	0.1	-0.4***
% HAQ-DI MCID	20%	51%
Mean change in FACIT-T	-0.5	-9.1***
	n=197	n=294
Mean Change in SF-36 PHS	0.9	5.8***
% SF-36 PHS MCID	13%	48%***
Mean Change in SF-36 MHS	1.3	4.7**
% SF-36 MHS MCID	20%	38%*

† Outcome at 24 weeks
Significant difference from placebo at the primary time point: * p < 0.05, **p < 0.001 ***p ≤ 0.0001 MCID HAQ-DI ≥ 0.22, MCID SF-36 PHS > 5.42, MCID SF-36 MHS > 6.33

Efficacy in autoantibody (RF and or anti-CCP) seropositive patients

Patients seropositive to Rheumatoid Factor (RF) and/or anti- Cyclic Citrullinated Peptide (anti-CCP) who were treated with rituximab in combination with methotrexate showed an enhanced response compared to patients negative to both.

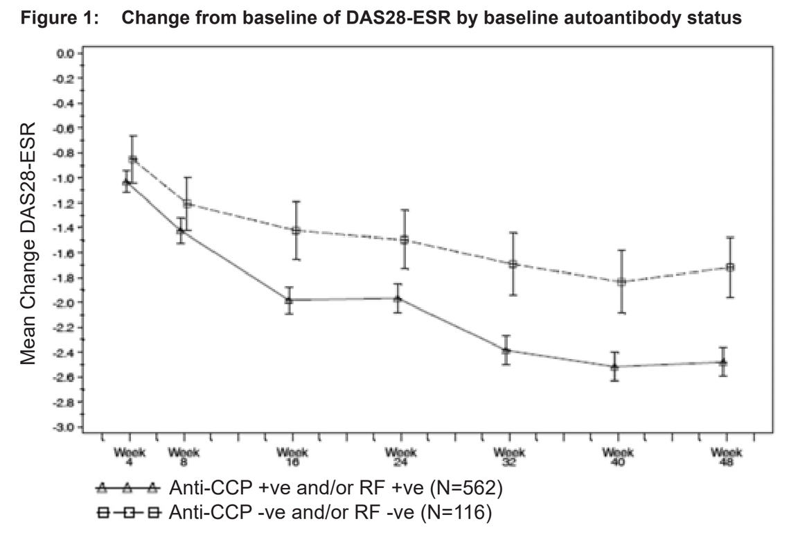
Efficacy outcomes in rituximab treated patients were analysed based on autoantibody status prior to commencing treatment. At Week 24, patients who were seropositive to RF and/or anti-CCP at baseline had a significantly increased probability of achieving ACR20 and 50 responses compared to seronegative patients (p=0.0312 and p=0.0096) (Table 15). These findings were replicated at Week 48, where autoantibody seropositivity also significantly increased the probability of achieving ACR70. At week 48 seropositive patients were 2-3 times more likely to achieve ACR responses compared to seronegative patients. Seropositive patients also had a significantly greater decrease in DAS28-ESR compared to seronegative patients (Figure 1).

Table 15 Summary of efficacy by baseline autoantibody status

	Week 24		Week 48	
	Seropositive (n=514)	Seronegative (n=106)	Seropositive (n=506)	Seronegative (n=101)
ACR20 (%)	62.3*	50.9	71. 1*	51.5
ACR50 (%)	32.7*	19.8	44.9**	22.8
ACR70 (%)	12.1	5.7	20.9*	6.9
EULAR Response (%)	74.8*	62.9	84.3*	72.3
Mean change DAS28-ESR	-1.97**	-1.50	-2.48***	-1.72

Significance levels were defined as * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$, *** $p < 0.0001$.

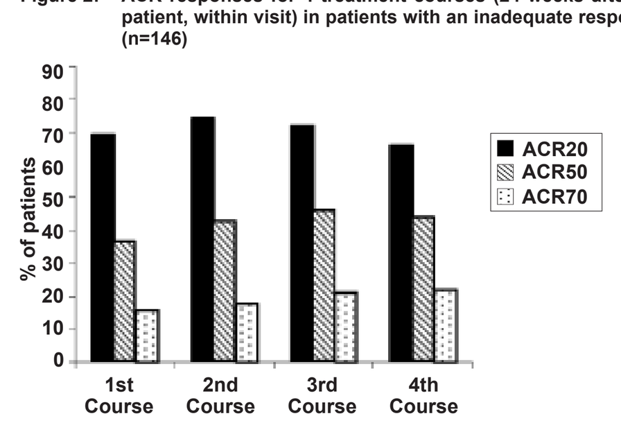
Figure 1: Change from baseline of DAS28-ESR by baseline autoantibody status



Long-term efficacy with multiple course therapy

Treatment with rituximab in combination with methotrexate over multiple courses resulted in sustained improvements in the clinical signs and symptoms of RA, as indicated by ACR, DAS28-ESR and EULAR responses which was evident in all patient populations studied (Figure 2). Sustained improvement in physical function as indicated by the HAQ-DI score and the proportion of patients achieving MCID for HAQ-DI were observed.

Figure 2: ACR responses for 4 treatment courses (24 weeks after each course (within patient, within visit) in patients with an inadequate response to TNF-inhibitors (n=146)



Clinical laboratory findings

A total of 392/3095 (12.7%) patients with rheumatoid arthritis tested positive for ADA in clinical studies following therapy with rituximab. The emergence of ADA was not associated with clinical deterioration or with an increased risk of reactions to subsequent infusions in the majority of patients. The presence of ADA may be associated with worsening of infusion or allergic reactions after the second infusion of subsequent courses.

Paediatric population

See Section 4.2 for information on paediatric use.

Clinical Experience in granulomatosis with polyangiitis (Wegener's) and microscopic polyangiitis

Adult Induction of remission

In GPA/MPA Study, a total of 197 patients aged 15 years or older with severely, active granulomatosis with polyangiitis (75%) and microscopic polyangiitis (24%) were enrolled and treated in an active-comparator, randomised, double-blind, multicenter, non-inferiority trial.

Patients were randomised in a 1:1 ratio to receive either oral cyclophosphamide daily (2 mg/kg/day) for 3-6 months or rituximab (375 mg/m²) once weekly for 4 weeks. All patients in the cyclophosphamide arm received azathioprine maintenance therapy in during follow-up. Patients in both arms received 1000 mg of pulse intravenous (IV) methylprednisolone (or another equivalent-dose glucocorticoid) per day for 1 to 3 days, followed by oral prednisone (1 mg/kg/day, not exceeding 80 mg/day). Prednisone tapering was to be completed by 6 months from the start of trial treatment.

The primary outcome measure was achievement of complete remission at 6 months defined as a Birmingham Vasculitis Activity Score for Wegener's granulomatosis (BVAS/WG) of 0, and off glucocorticoid therapy. The prespecified non-inferiority margin for the treatment difference was 20%. The trial demonstrated non-inferiority of rituximab to cyclophosphamide for complete remission (CR) at 6 months (Table 16).

Efficacy was observed both for patients with newly diagnosed disease and for patients with relapsing disease (Table 17).

Table 16 Percentage of Patients Who Achieved Complete Remission at 6 Months (Intent-to-Treat Population*)

	rituximab (n = 99)	Cyclophosphamide (n = 98)	Treatment Difference (rituximab-Cyclophosphamide)
Rate	63.6%	53.1%	10.6% 95.1%[b] CI (-3.2%, 24.3%)[a]

\- CI=confidence interval.
\- * Worst case imputation
[a] Non-inferiority was demonstrated since the lower bound (− 3.2%) was higher than the pre-determined non-inferiority margin (− 20%).
[b] The 95.1% confidence level reflects an additional 0.001 alpha to account for an interim efficacy analysis.

Table 17 Complete remission at 6-months by disease status

	rituximab	Cyclophosphamide	Difference (CI 95%)
All patients	n=99	n=98	
Newly diagnosed	n=48	n=48	
Relapsing	n=51	n=50	
Complete remission			
All patients	63.6%	53.1%	10.6% (-3.2, 24.3)
Newly diagnosed	60.4%	64.6%	− 4.2% (− 23.6, 15.3)
Relapsing	66.7%	42.0%	24.7% (5.8, 43.6)

Worst case imputation is applied for patients with missing data

Complete Remission at 12 and 18 months

In the rituximab group, 48% of patients achieved CR at 12 months, and 39% of patients achieved CR at 18 months. In patients treated with cyclophosphamide (followed by azathioprine for maintenance of complete remission), 39% of patients achieved CR at 12 months, and 33% of patients achieved CR at 18 months. From month 12 to month 18, 8 relapses were observed in the rituximab group compared with four in the cyclophosphamide group.

Retreatment with rituximab

Based upon investigator judgment, 15 patients received a second course of rituximab therapy for treatment of relapse of disease activity which occurred between 6 and 18 months after the first course of rituximab. The limited data from the present trial preclude any conclusions regarding the efficacy of subsequent courses of rituximab in patients with GPA and MPA.

Continued immunosuppressive therapy may be especially appropriate in patients at risk for relapses (i.e. with history of earlier relapses and GPA, or patients with reconstitution of B-lymphocytes in addition to PR3-ANCA at monitoring). When remission with rituximab has been achieved, continued immunosuppressive therapy may be considered to prevent relapse. The efficacy and safety of rituximab in maintenance therapy has not been established.

Laboratory Evaluations

A total of 23/99 (23%) rituximab-treated patients from the induction of remission trial tested positive for ADA by 18 months. None of the 99 rituximab-treated patients were ADA positive at screening. There was no apparent negative impact of the presence of ADA on safety or efficacy in the induction of remission trial.

Adult Maintenance treatment

A total of 117 patients (88 with GPA, 24 with MPA, and 5 with renal-limited ANCA-associated vasculitis) in disease remission were randomized to receive azathioprine (59 patients) or rituximab (58 patients) in a prospective, multi-center, controlled, open-label study. Included patients were 21 to 75 years of age and had newly diagnosed or relapsing disease in complete remission after combined treatment with glucocorticoids and pulse cyclophosphamide. The majority of patients were ANCA-positive at diagnosis or during the course of their disease; had histologically confirmed necrotizing small-vessel vasculitis with a clinical phenotype of GPA/MPA, or renal limited ANCA-associated vasculitis; or both.

Remission-induction therapy included IV prednisone, administered as per the investigator's discretion, preceded in some patients by methylprednisolone pulses, and pulse cyclophosphamide until remission was attained after 4 to 6 months. At that time, and within a maximum of 1 month after the last cyclophosphamide pulse, patients were randomly assigned to receive either rituximab (two 500 mg IV infusions separated by two weeks (on Day 1 and Day 15) followed by 500 mg IV every 6 months for 18 months) or azathioprine (administered orally at a dose of 2 mg/kg/day for 12 months, then 1.5 mg/kg/day for 6 months, and finally 1 mg/kg/day for 4 months (treatment discontinuation after these 22 months)). Prednisone treatment was tapered and then kept at a low dose (approximately 5 mg per day) for at least 18 months after randomization. Prednisone dose tapering and the decision to stop prednisone treatment after month 18 were left at the investigator's discretion.

All patients were followed until month 28 (10 or 6 months, respectively, after the last rituximab infusion or azathioprine dose). *Pneumocystis jirovecii* pneumonia prophylaxis was required for all patients with CD4+ T-lymphocyte counts less than 250 per cubic millimeter.

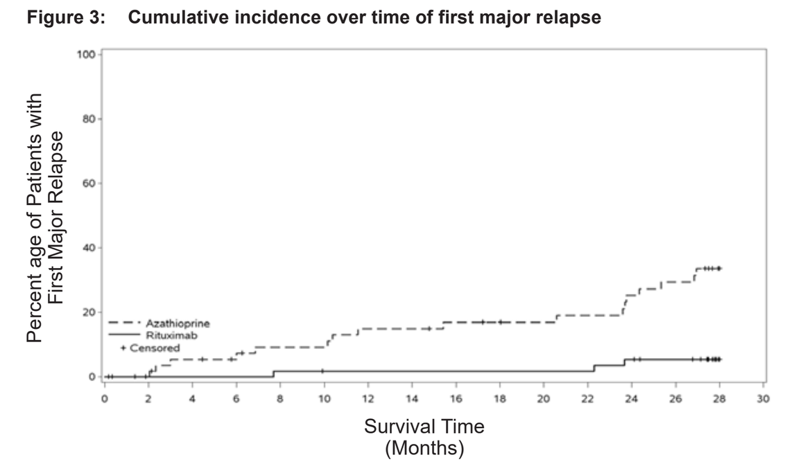
The primary outcome measure was the rate of major relapse at month 28.

Results

At month 28, major relapse (defined by the reappearance of clinical and/or laboratory signs of vasculitis activity ([BVAS] > 0) that could lead to organ failure or damage or could be life threatening) occurred in 3 patients (5%) in the rituximab group and 17 patients (29%) in the azathioprine group (p=0.0007). Minor relapses (not life threatening and not involving major organ damage) occurred in seven patients in the rituximab group (12%) and eight patients in the azathioprine group (14%).

The cumulative incidence rate curves showed that time to first major relapse was longer in patients with rituximab starting from month 2 and was maintained up to month 28 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Cumulative incidence over time of first major relapse



Number of Subjects with Major Relapse															
Azathioprine	0	0	3	3	5	5	8	8	9	9	9	10	13	15	17
Rituximab	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3
Number of subjects at risk															
Azathioprine	59	56	52	50	47	47	44	44	42	41	40	39	36	34	0
Rituximab	58	56	56	56	55	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	52	50	0

Note: Patients were censored at month 28 if they had no event.

Laboratory evaluations

A total of 6/34 (18%) of rituximab treated patients from the maintenance therapy clinical trial developed ADA. There was no apparent negative impact of the presence of ADA on safety or efficacy in the maintenance therapy clinical trial.

Clinical experience in pemphigus vulgaris

PV Study 1 (Study ML22196)

The efficacy and safety of rituximab in combination with short-term, low-dose glucocorticoid (prednisone) therapy were evaluated in newly diagnosed patients with moderate to severe pemphigus (74 pemphigus vulgaris [PV] and 16 pemphigus foliaceus [PF]) in this randomised, open-label, controlled, multicenter study. Patients were between 19 and 79 years of age and had not received prior therapies for pemphigus. In the PV population, 5 (13%) patients in the rituximab group and 3 (8%) patients in the standard prednisone group had moderate disease and 33 (87%) patients in the rituximab group and 33 (92%) patients in the standard-dose prednisone group had severe disease according to disease severity defined by Harman's criteria.

Patients were stratified by baseline disease severity (moderate or severe) and randomised 1:1 to receive either rituximab and low-dose prednisone or standard-dose prednisone. Patients randomised to the rituximab group received an initial intravenous infusion of 1000 mg rituximab on Study Day 1 in combination with 0.5 mg/kg/day oral prednisone tapered off over 3 months if they had moderate disease or 1 mg/kg/day oral prednisone tapered off over 6 months if they had severe disease, and a second intravenous infusion of 1000 mg on Study Day 15. Maintenance infusions of rituximab 500 mg were administered at months 12 and 18. Patients randomised to the standard-dose prednisone group received an initial 1 mg/kg/day oral prednisone tapered off over 12 months if they had moderate disease or 1.5 mg/kg/day oral prednisone tapered off over 18 months if they had severe disease. Patients in the rituximab group who relapsed could receive an additional infusion of rituximab 1000 mg in combination with reintroduced or escalated prednisone dose. Maintenance and relapse infusions were administered no sooner than 16 weeks following the previous infusion.

The primary objective for the study was complete remission (complete epithelialisation and absence of new and/or established lesions) at month 24 without the use of prednisone therapy for two months or more (CRoff for ≥ 2 months).

PV Study 1 Results

The study showed statistically significant results of rituximab and low-dose prednisone over standard-dose prednisone in achieving CRoff ≥ 2 months at month 24 in PV patients (see Table 18).

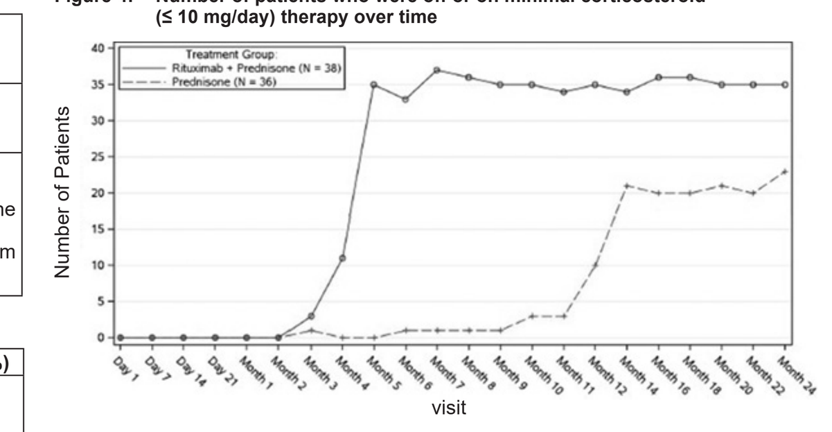
Table 18 Percentage of PV patients who achieved complete remission off corticosteroid therapy for two months or more at month 24 (Intent-to-Treat Population - PV)

	Rituximab + Prednisone N=38	Prednisone N=36	p-value[a]	95% CI[b]
Number of responders (response rate [%])	34 (89.5%)	10 (27.8%)	< 0.0001	61.7% (38.4, 76.5)

[a] p-value is from Fisher's exact test with mid-p correction
[b] 95% confidence interval is corrected Newcombe interval

The number of rituximab plus low-dose prednisone patients off prednisone therapy or on minimal therapy (prednisone dose of 10 mg or less per day) compared to standard-dose prednisone patients over the 24-month treatment period shows a steroid-sparing effect of rituximab (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Number of patients who were off or on minimal corticosteroid (≤ 10 mg/day) therapy over time



Post-hoc retrospective laboratory evaluation

A total of 19/34 (56%) patients with PV, who were treated with rituximab, tested positive for ADA antibodies by 18 months. The clinical relevance of ADA formation in rituximab-treated PV patients is unclear.

PV Study 2 (Study WA29330)

In a randomized, double-blind, double-dummy, active-comparator, multicenter study, the efficacy and safety of rituximab compared with mycophenolate mofetil (MMF) were evaluated in patients with moderate-to-severe PV receiving 60-120 mg/day oral prednisone or equivalent (1.0-1.5 mg/kg/day) at study entry and tapered to reach a dose of 60 or 80 mg/day by Day 1. Patients had a confirmed diagnosis of PV within the previous 24 months and evidence of moderate-to-severe disease (defined as a total Pemphigus Disease Area Index, PDAI, activity score of ≥ 15).

One hundred and thirty-five patients were randomized to treatment with rituximab 1000 mg administered on Day 1, Day 15, Week 24 and Week 26 or oral MMF 2 g/day for 52 weeks in combination with 60 or 80 mg oral prednisone with the aim of tapering to 0 mg/day prednisone by Week 24.

The primary efficacy objective for this study was to evaluate at week 52, the efficacy of rituximab compared with MMF in achieving sustained complete remission defined as achieving healing of lesions with no new active lesions (i.e., PDAI activity score of 0) while on 0 mg/day prednisone or equivalent, and maintaining this response for at least 16 consecutive weeks, during the 52-week treatment period.

PV Study 2 Results

The study demonstrated the superiority of rituximab over MMF in combination with a tapering course of oral corticosteroids in achieving CRoff corticosteroid ≥ 16 weeks at Week 52 in PV patients (Table 19). The majority of patients in the mITT population were newly diagnosed (74%) and 26% of patients had established disease (duration of illness ≥ 6 months and received prior treatment for PV).

Table 19 Percentage of PV Patients Who Achieved Sustained Complete Remission Off Corticosteroid Therapy for 16 Weeks or More at Week 52 (Modified Intent-to-Treat Population)

	Rituximab (N=62)	MMF (N=63)	Difference (95% CI)	p-value
Number of responders (response rate [%])	25 (40.3%)	6 (9.5%)	30.80% (14.70%, 45.15%)	<0.0001
Newly diagnosed patients	19 (39.6%)	4 (9.1%)		
Patients with established disease	6 (42.9%)	2 (10.5%)		

MMF = Mycophenolate mofetil. CI = Confidence Interval.
Newly diagnosed patients = duration of illness < 6 months or no prior treatment for PV.
Patients with established disease = duration of illness ≥ 6 months and received prior treatment for PV.
Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel test is used for p-value.

The analysis of all secondary parameters (including cumulative oral corticosteroid dose, the total number of disease flares, and change in health-related quality of life, as measured by the Dermatology Life Quality Index) verified the statistically significant results of rituximab compared to MMF. Testing of secondary endpoints were controlled for multiplicity.

Glucocorticoid exposure

The cumulative oral corticosteroid dose was significantly lower in patients treated with rituximab.

The median (min, max) cumulative prednisone dose at Week 52 was 2775 mg (450, 22180) in the rituximab group compared to 4005 mg (900, 19920) in the MMF group (p=0.0005).

Disease flare

The total number of disease flares was significantly lower in patients treated with rituximab compared to MMF (6 vs. 44, p < 0.0001) and there were fewer patients who had at least one disease flare (8.1% vs. 41.3%).

Laboratory evaluations

By week 52, a total of 20/63 (31.7%) (19 treatment-induced and 1 treatment-enhanced) rituximab-treated PV patients tested positive for ADA. There was no apparent negative impact of the presence of ADA on safety or efficacy in PV Study 2.

5.2 Pharmacokinetic properties

Adult Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

Based on a population pharmacokinetic analysis in 298 NHL patients who received single or multiple infusions of rituximab as a single agent or in combination with CHOP therapy (applied rituximab doses ranged from 100 to 500 mg/m²), the typical population estimates of nonspecific clearance (CL_1), specific clearance (CL_2) likely contributed by B cells or tumour burden, and central compartment volume of distribution (V1) were 0.14 L/day, 0.59 L/day, and 2.7 L, respectively. The estimated median terminal elimination half-life of rituximab was 22 days (range, 6.1 to 52 days). Baseline CD19-positive cell counts and size of measurable tumour lesions contributed to some of the variability in CL_2 of rituximab in data from 161 patients given 375 mg/m² as an intravenous infusion for 4 weekly doses. Patients with higher CD19-positive cell counts or tumour lesions had a higher CL_2.

However, a large component of inter-individual variability remained for CL_2 after correction for CD19-positive cell counts and tumour lesion size. V_1 varied by body surface area (BSA) and CHOP therapy. This variability in V_1 (27.1% and 19.0%) contributed by the range in BSA (1.53 to 2.32 m²) and concurrent CHOP therapy, respectively, were relatively small. Age, gender and WHO performance status had no effect on the pharmacokinetics of rituximab. This analysis suggests that dose adjustment of rituximab with any of the tested covariates is not expected to result in a meaningful reduction in its pharmacokinetic variability.

Rituximab, administered as an intravenous infusion at a dose of 375 mg/m² at weekly intervals for 4 doses to 203 patients with NHL naive to rituximab, yielded a mean C_{max} following the fourth infusion of 486 µg/mL (range, 77.5 to 996.6 µg/mL). Rituximab was detectable in the serum of patients 3 – 6 months after completion of last treatment.

Upon administration of rituximab at a dose of 375 mg/m² as an intravenous infusion at weekly intervals for 8 doses to 37 patients with NHL, the mean C_{max} increased with each successive infusion, spanning from a mean of 243 µg/mL (range, 16 – 582 µg/mL) after the first infusion to 550 µg/mL (range, 171 – 1177 µg/mL) after the eighth infusion.

The pharmacokinetic profile of rituximab when administered as 6 infusions of 375 mg/m² in combination with 6 cycles of CHOP chemotherapy was similar to that seen with rituximab alone.

Chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

Rituximab was administered as an intravenous infusion at a first-cycle dose of 375 mg/m² increased to 500 mg/m² each cycle for 5 doses in combination with fludarabine and cyclophosphamide in CLL patients. The mean C_{max} (N=15) was 408 µg/mL (range, 97 – 764 µg/mL) after the fifth 500 mg/m² infusion and the mean terminal half-life was 32 days (range, 14 – 62 days).

Rheumatoid arthritis

Following two intravenous infusions of MabThera at a dose of 1000 mg, two weeks apart, the mean terminal half-life was 20.8 days (range, 8.58 to 35.9 days), mean systemic clearance was 0.23 L/day (range, 0.091 to 0.67 L/day), and mean steady-state distribution volume was 4.6 l (range, 1.7 to 7.51 L). Population pharmacokinetic analysis of the same data gave similar mean values for systemic clearance and half-life, 0.26 L/day and 20.4 days, respectively. Population pharmacokinetic analysis revealed that BSA and gender were the most significant covariates to explain inter-individual variability in pharmacokinetic parameters. After adjusting for BSA, male subjects had a larger volume of distribution and a faster clearance than female subjects. The gender- related pharmacokinetic differences are not considered to be clinically relevant and dose adjustment is not required. No pharmacokinetic data are available in patients with hepatic or renal impairment.

The pharmacokinetics of rituximab were assessed following two intravenous (IV) doses of 500 mg and 1000 mg on Days 1 and 15 in four studies. In all these studies, rituximab pharmacokinetics were dose proportional over the limited dose range studied. Mean C_{max} for serum rituximab following first infusion ranged from 157 to 171 µg/mL for 2 x 500 mg dose and ranged from 298 to 341 µg/mL for 2 x 1000 mg dose. Following second infusion, mean C_{max} ranged from 183 to 198 µg/mL for the 2 ×500 mg dose and ranged from 355 to 404 µg/mL for the 2 × 1000 mg dose. Mean terminal elimination half-life ranged from 15 to 16 days for the 2 x 500 mg dose group and 17 to 21 days for the 2 × 1000 mg dose group. Mean C_{max} was 16 to 19% higher following second infusion compared to the first infusion for both doses.

The pharmacokinetics of rituximab were assessed following two IV doses of 500 mg and 1000 mg upon re-treatment in the second course. Mean C_{max} for serum rituximab following first infusion was 170 to 175 µg/mL for 2 x 500 mg dose and 317 to 370 µg/mL for 2 x 1000 mg dose. C_{max} following second infusion, was 207 µg/mL for the 2 x 500 mg dose and ranged from 377 to 386 µg/mL for the 2 x 1000 mg dose. Mean terminal elimination half-life after the second infusion, following the second course, was 19 days for 2 x 500 mg dose and ranged from 21 to 22 days for the 2 x 1000 mg dose.

PK parameters for rituximab were comparable over the two treatment courses.

The pharmacokinetic (PK) parameters in the anti-TNF inadequate responder population, following the same dosage regimen (2 x 1000 mg, IV, 2 weeks apart), were similar with a mean maximum serum concentration of 369 µg/mL and a mean terminal half-life of 19.2 days.

Granulomatosis with polyangiitis and microscopic polyangiitis

Adult population

Based on the population pharmacokinetic analysis of data in 97 patients with granulomatosis with polyangiitis and microscopic polyangiitis who received 375 mg/m² rituximab once weekly for four doses, the estimated median terminal elimination half-life was 23 days (range, 9 to 49 days).

Rituximab mean clearance and volume of distribution were 0.313 L/day (range, 0.116 to 0.726 L/day) and 4.50 L (range 2.25 to 7.39 L) respectively. Maximum concentration during the first 180 days (C_{max}), minimum concentration at Day 180 (C180) and Cumulative area under the curve over 180 days (AUC180) were (median [range]) 372.6 (252.3-533.5) µg/mL, 2.1 (0-29.3) µg/mL and 10302 (3653- 21874) µg/mL*days, respectively. The PK parameters of rituximab in adult GPA and MPA patients appear similar to what has been observed in rheumatoid arthritis patients.

Pemphigus vulgaris

The PK parameters in adult PV patients receiving rixathon 1000 mg at Days 1, 15, 168, and 182 are summarized in Table 20.

Table 20 Population PK in adult PV patients from PV Study 2

Parameter	Infusion Cycle	
	1st cycle of 1000 mg Day 1 and Day 15 N=67	2nd cycle of 1000 mg Day 168 and Day 182 N=67
Terminal Half-life (days)		
Median	21.0	26.5
(Range)	(9.3-36.2)	(16.4-42.8)
Clearance (L/day)		
Mean	391	247
(Range)	(159-1510)	(128-454)
Central Volume of Distribution (L)		
Mean	3.52	3.52
(Range)	(2.48-5.22)	(2.48-5.22)

Following the first two rituximab administrations (at day 1 and 15, corresponding to cycle 1), the PK parameters of rituximab in patients with PV were similar to those in patients with GPA/MPA and patients with RA. Following the last two administrations (at day 168 and 182, corresponding to cycle 2), rituximab clearance decreased while the central volume of distribution remained unchanged.

5.3 Preclinical safety data

Rituximab has shown to be highly specific to the CD20 antigen on B cells. Toxicity studies in cynomolgus monkeys have shown no other effect than the expected pharmacological depletion of B cells in peripheral blood and in lymphoid tissue.

Developmental toxicity studies have been performed in cynomolgus monkeys at doses up to 100 mg/kg (treatment on gestation days 20-50) and have revealed no evidence of toxicity to the foetus due to rituximab. However, dose-dependent pharmacologic depletion of B cells in the lymphoid organs of the foetuses was observed, which persisted post natally and was accompanied by a decrease in IgG level in the newborn animals affected. B cell counts returned to normal in these animals within 6 months of birth and did not compromise the reaction to immunisation.

Standard tests to investigate mutagenicity have not been carried out, since such tests are not relevant for this molecule. No long-term animal studies have been performed to establish the carcinogenic potential of rituximab.

Specific studies to determine the effects of rituximab on fertility have not been performed. In general toxicity studies in cynomolgus monkeys no deleterious effects on reproductive organs in males or females were observed.

6. PHARMACEUTICAL PARTICULARS

6.1 List of excipients

Sodium chloride
Citric acid monohydrate
Polysorbate 80
Sodium hydroxide
Hydrochloric acid
Water for injections

6.2 Incompatibilities

No incompatibilities between Rixathon and polyvinyl chloride or polyethylene bags or infusion sets have been observed.

6.3 Shelf life

Unopened vial:
The expiry date of the product is indicated on the packging materials.

Rixathon may be stored at temperatures up to a maximum of 30°C for a single period of up to 7 days, but not exceeding the original expiry date. The new expiry date must be written on the carton. Upon removal from refrigerated storage, Rixathon must not be returned to refrigerated storage.

Diluted solution

- After aseptic dilution in sodium chloride solution:
  Chemical and physical stability of Rixathon diluted in 0.9% sodium chloride solution has been demonstrated for:
  - 30 days at 2°C - 8°C and subsequently 24 hours at room temperature (≤ 25°C).
  Or
  - 7 days at ≤ 30°C, while protected from light.
- After aseptic dilution in glucose solution:
  Chemical and physical stability of Rixathon diluted in 5% glucose solution has been demonstrated for 24 hours at 2°C - 8°C and subsequently 12 hours at room temperature (≤ 25°C).

From a microbiological point of view, the prepared infusion solution should be used immediately. If not used immediately, in-use storage times and conditions prior to use are the responsibility of the user and would normally not be longer than 24 hours at 2°C – 8°C, unless dilution has taken place in controlled and validated aseptic conditions.

6.4 Special precautions for storage

Store in a refrigerator (2°C – 8°C).
Keep the container in the outer carton in order to protect from light.
For storage conditions of the unopened vial outside the refrigerator, see section 6.3.
For storage conditions after dilution of the medicinal product, see section 6.3.

6.5 Nature and contents of container

10 mL vial: Colorless tubular glass vial with chlorobutyl rubber stopper containing 100 mg of rituximab in 10 mL. Pack of 2 vials.

50 mL vial: Colorless tubular glass vial with chlorobutyl rubber stopper containing 500 mg of rituximab in 50 mL. Packs of 1 vial.

Each box of Rixathon 100 mg contains 2 vials.
Each box of Rixathon 500 mg contains 1 vial.

6.6 Special precautions for disposal and other handling

Rixathon is provided in sterile, preservative-free, non-pyrogenic, single use vials.

Aseptic preparation

Aseptic handling must be ensured when preparing the infusion. Preparation should be:
- performed under aseptic conditions by trained personnel in accordance with good practice rules especially with respect to the aseptic preparation of parenteral products.
- prepared in a laminar flow hood or biological safety cabinet using standard precautions for the safe handling of intravenous agents.

Aseptically withdraw the necessary amount of Rixathon, and dilute to a calculated concentration of 1 to 4 mg/mL rituximab into an infusion bag containing sterile, pyrogen-free sodium chloride 9 mg/mL (0.9%) solution for injection or 5% D-Glucose in water. For mixing the solution, gently invert the bag in order to avoid foaming. Care must be taken to ensure the sterility of prepared solutions. Since the medicinal product does not contain any anti-microbial preservative or bacteriostatic agents, aseptic technique must be observed. Parenteral medicinal products should be inspected visually for particulate matter and discolouration prior to administration.

Any unused medicinal product or waste material should be disposed of in accordance with local requirements.

7. LICENSE HOLDER AND IMPORTER'S NAME AND ADDRESS

Sandoz Pharmaceuticals Israel Ltd., P.O.Box 9015, Tel Aviv, Israel

8. MARKETING AUTHORISATION NUMBER

Rixathon 162-10-35741-00

Medicine: keep out of reach of children

Revised in August 2024