Satakunnan hyvinvointialue

# Sarilumab, KEVZARA® – in the treatment of rheumatic diseases

## Indications

Sarilumab is used for indications such as the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis when sufficient treatment response is not achieved with traditional antirheumatic drugs or they cannot be used.

## Drug product and mode of action

Sarilumab belongs to a class of drugs called biologic drugs. Cytokines, which provide communication between cells, maintain the inflammatory reaction in rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory joint diseases. In terms of inflammation, one of the most important cytokines is IL-6 (interleukin-6). Sarilumab is an IL-6 receptor antagonist that neutralises the biological activity of IL-6. It soothes joint inflammation, prevents it from progressing, and prevents joint damage.

## Dosage and method of administration

Sarilumab is given as a subcutaneous injection (under the skin) using a prefilled injector pen. The dose is usually 200 mg once every two weeks, sometimes 150 mg once every two weeks.

## Adverse effects

Sarilumab may increase susceptibility to infections. The use of the drug must be stopped for the duration of infections with fever or infections that require treatment with antibiotics. It can also cause elevation of liver enzymes and cholesterol, a decrease in the number of white blood cells and blood platelets, and as a very rare adverse effect, perforation of the gastrointestinal tract.

## Pregnancy and breastfeeding

The use of sarilumab is not recommended during pregnancy or breastfeeding. It is recommended that the use of the drug is stopped 12 weeks before a planned pregnancy.

## Treatment follow-up

Safety tests are taken a month after onset of treatment, followed by tests every 3–6 months. The safety tests include the following: Basic blood count and ALT.
CREA, U-ChemScr, CRP and ESR are measured in connection with treatment assessment before doctor's appointment every 6–12 months. Lipids are measured before and 3 months after onset of treatment.

## Other considerations

Sarilumab is stopped at least two weeks before and after surgery. The operation is timed so that it takes place when the next dose would be taken. In the case of individual patients, the duration of the drug pause also depends on the type and urgency of the operation, patient's overall

infection risk, and risk of recurrence of the underlying illness. The use of the drug may be restarted once the wound has healed properly.

Vaccines that contain live attenuated organisms should not be given during treatment. Before the onset of treatment, any dental procedures required must be completed and vaccinations must be up to date.

**Link** Reumalääkkeiden ohjeet | Reumatalo.fi | Terveyskylä.fi (in Finnish)

Wellbeing services county of Satakunta