Satakunnan hyvinvointialue

Tocilizumab, ROACTEMRA® – in the treatment of rheumatic diseases

Indications

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

Drug product and mode of action

Tocilizumab 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, the most important cytokines include IL-6 (interleukin-6). Tocilizumab 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

Tocilizumab can be given as a subcutaneous injection (under the skin) or intravenous infusion (into a vein). Tocilizumab is usually given as a subcutaneous injection, 162 mg once a week, using a prefilled syringe. When given intravenously, the dose is 4-8 mg/kg as a 60-minute infusion once every 4 weeks.

Adverse effects

Tocilizumab 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 level, a decrease in the number of white blood cells, and as a very rare adverse effect, perforation of the gastrointestinal tract. Fever, cold shivers, skin rash, itching, shortness of breath, changes in blood pressure, and even an anaphylactic reaction may occur during the infusion. Severe infusion reactions are rare.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

The use of tocilizumab is not recommended during pregnancy or breastfeeding. The use of the drug is recommended to be stopped 3 months before a planned pregnancy.

Treatment follow-up

Safety tests are taken a month after onset of treatment, and then 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

Depending on mode of administration, the use of tocilizumab is discontinued at least a week before and two weeks after an operation. 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