MERCK SERONO

February 2009

Direct Healthcare Professional Communication on the recommended suspension of the marketing authorisation for Raptiva®

Dear Health Care Professional,

This Communication is to inform you about the recommendation of the European Medicines Agency (EMEA) to suspend the marketing authorisation for Raptiva® (efalizumab).

Summary

- The EMEA considers that the benefit/risk in the approved indication has become unfavourable following safety concerns.
- Three virologically confirmed and one suspected case of progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) have been reported in patients with chronic plaque psoriasis who had been continuously treated with Raptiva® for more than three years.
- In addition to PML, Raptiva is associated with other serious side effects, including Guillain-Barré and Miller-Fisher syndromes, encephalitis, encephalopathy, meningitis, sepsis and opportunistic infections (infections occurring in people with compromised immune systems).
- The CHMP recommendation of suspension is expected to be followed by a European Commission Decision. Within a few months from now the product will no longer be available on the market.
- Prescibers should not issue any new prescriptions for Raptiva and should review the treatment of patients currently taking the medicine to assess the most appropriate alternatives.
- Management of patients discontinuing Raptiva includes close observation for neurological symptoms and symptoms of infection. The effects on the immune system lasts for about 8 to 12 weeks.
- The content of this letter has been agreed with the European Authorities.

Raptiva is an immunosuppressive, humanised monoclonal antibody which was approved in the European Union in 2004 for treatment of adult patients with moderate to severe chronic plaque psoriasis who have failed to respond to, or who have a contraindication to, or are intolerant to other systemic therapies including ciclosporin, methotrexate and PUVA.

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Further information on the safety concern

Progressive Multifocal Leukoencephalopathy (PML) is a rare, progressive and demyelinating disease of the central nervous system that usually leads to death or severe disability. PML is caused by activation of JC virus, a polyoma virus that resides in latent form in up to 80% of healthy adults. JC virus usually remain latent, typically only causing PML in immunocompromised patients. The factors leading to activation of the latent infection are not fully understood.

Since September 2008, there have been three confirmed cases of PML in patients who had received Raptiva® (efalizumab) for treatment of chronic plaque psoriasis in the United States or Europe. In these cases Raptiva had been given as monotherapy for more than 3 years. Apart from these confirmed cases, a case of suspected PML was reported in 2007, but the patient died before a final diagnosis was made (no lumbar puncture was done).

The overall exposure since Raptiva was first approved in the United States in October 2003, is estimated at approximately 47'000 patient-years worldwide (of which approximately 15'000 patient-years were in the European Union).

The safety of patients is of utmost importance to Merck Serono, and the Company is working diligently together with the European authorities to implement the marketing authorisation suspension.

Call for reporting

Healthcare professionals should report any suspected adverse reactions associated with the use of Raptiva to the Irish Medicines Board (IMB), in the usual way (www.imb.ie). Adverse events should also be reported to Merck Serono ltd. (+44 (0)20 8818 7373, medinfo.uk@merckserono.net) or to Merck Serono Global Drug Safety Department (GlobalDrugSafety@merckserono.net).

Communication information

If you have further questions on this issue, please contact Medical Information, Merck Serono ltd., Bedfont Cross, Stanwell Road, Feltham, Middlesex TW14 8BR [+44 (0)20 8818 7373, medinfo.uk@merckserono.net)

Yours sincerely,

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Director Health and Clinical Excellence