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**Abiraterone acetate**

introduction

Prostate cancer is one of the most common malignancies in the developed world. In the USA, approximately 200,000 men were diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1998. At the time of presentation, many prostate cancer are androgen-dependent. Most circulating androgens are derived from the testes, but the adrenals also provide a significant supply. In order to block the effects of androgens from both sources it is currently necessary to administer a slow release LHRH agonist by injection, together with an oral antiandrogen. A more convenient alternative approach would be the complete inhibition of both testicular and adrenal androgen production by effective and selective inhibition of 17 alpha-hydroxylase/C17-20 lyase, the key enzyme in the androgen biosynthetic pathway which is present in both organs.

key features

Abiraterone acetate, one compound from a series of inhibitors of the enzyme complex, has been selected on the basis of high inhibitory potency. A phase I clinical study has been performed to examine the effects of single or multiple doses of this orally active drug in chemically castrate or untreated patients. The trial has shown that abiraterone acetate is a potent inhibitor of testosterone production and can itself reduce testosterone to sub-castrate levels.

applications

The precise clinical role of abiraterone acetate will require additional clinical studies before it can be fully determined. It is believed that the compound may be a useful adjunct in those patients who are being treated with a LHRH agonist and who show signs of progression, or as a second line therapy in hormone relapsed patients. A role in first line treatment is possible.

commercial/patent status

BTG is seeking licensees who have the ability to develop this compound further and bring a product to market. Abiraterone acetate is claimed *per se* in granted patents and patent application filed in major territories. A convenient method of synthesis is also claimed. This protection includes US granted patents 5004213 and 5618807, both with expiry dates in 2014.

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