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Novartis calls off 3 Beovu trials testing frequent dosing on concerns of vision threatening side effect

By Angus Liu Jun 1, 2021 11:41am

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Friday, Novartis said it had [decided to nix](#) three Beovu trials early after an interim analysis. The Merlin study found increased rates of inflammation of the eyes in patients who got Beovu compared to those who received Regeneron and Bayer's rival Eylea.

The Merlin trial, as well as the Raptor and Raven studies, were testing Beovu given every four weeks. The drug currently carries an FDA label for dosing every eight to 12 weeks after three initial doses.

Novartis said it has communicated the data to health authorities and will seek an update on the drug. It will also amend the protocols of other ongoing Beovu trials to remove the four-week dosing from the maintenance phase.

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Novartis launched the Merlin trial to see if the more frequent dosing could help age-related macular degeneration patients who still have unresolved retinal fluid despite anti-VEGF therapy. In the front, 6 mg monthly Beovu matched up to 2 mg monthly Eylea in change in visual acuity. The drug also bested Eylea on some anatomical secondary endpoints. Novartis

hopes for the drug as it matched Eylea in best-corrected visual acuity and showed it o retinal fluid. Now, though, the drug has almost disappeared from Novartis' public disc financial performance. And with the latest safety finding, Novartis will likely have a ha confidence in Beovu.

In the first quarter, Beovu only pulled in \$39 million in sales, a 44% decline over the p safety scare and the pandemic's constraint on the overall ophthalmology market. Tha Eylea's 15% U.S. sales boost during the same period to \$1.35 billion.

The company has yet to identify the root cause behind Beovu's safety problem.

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