MARKETING

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

By **Angus Liu** Jun 1, 2021 11:41am

age-related macular degeneration | drug safety | VEGF | Beovu

Friday, Novartis said it had decided to nix three Beovu trials early after an interim ana Merlin study found increased rates of inflammation of the eyes in patients who got Be those who received Regeneron and Bayer's rival Eylea.

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

Novartis said it has communicated the data to health authorities and will seek an upd It will also amend the protocols of other ongoing Beovu trials to remove the four-wee the maintenance phase.

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

hopes for the drug as it matched Eylea in best-corrected visual acuity and showed it c
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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