Is Leqembi a good option for you?

What you need to know

What is Leqembi?

Leqembi (lecanemab) is an injectable medication approved for the treatment of early Alzheimer's Disease.

How does lecanemab work to treat Alzheimer's disease?

Researchers believe there is evidence that suggests a buildup of beta-amyloid proteins (plaques) causes a disruption in how the brain cells communicate with each other. When these plaques cover a small region of the brain, it can interfere with functions such as memory and learning.

As these plaques spread and cover a larger area of the brain, symptoms such as confusion and speech issues are seen. The earlier these plaque changes are stopped, the better. Lecanemab aims to stop the spread of these plaques.

Who is it prescribed for?

Lecanemab is prescribed for patients with mild symptoms of dementia. Your healthcare provider will first perform tests to make sure lecanemab is right for you.

These tests will confirm if beta amyloid plaques are present in your brain. If you do not have amyloid plaques, lecanemab will not be useful for you. It also has not been shown to be effective in patients with severe dementia.

Is it a cure?

No. Lecanemab will not cure Alzheimer's disease, but it may delay your dementia symptoms from getting worse.

Will this drug restore memories or cognitive function that has been lost?

There is no evidence that lecanemab can restore memories or reverse any cognitive function that has been lost due to Alzheimer's disease.

What is the difference between lecanemab and other dementia medications?

Common medications prescribed for dementia, such as donepezil or memantine, only lesson the symptoms of dementia, such as memory loss and confusion. Lecanemab is designed to reduce further buildup of the beta-amyloid plaques, and slow the rate of disease progression and cognitive decline.

How it is used?

Lecanemab is given as an intravenous (IV) injection every 2 weeks (14 days). A needle will be placed in your vein to administer the medication, and will be given over approximately 1 hour.

Since it is an IV injection, you will need to go to a hospital or infusion center to get the medication.

What are the side effects?

The most common side effects include:

- Infusion-related reactions, such as fever and flu-like symptoms, nausea, vomiting, or blood pressure changes
- Headache
- Cough
- Diarrhea

One potential side effect to be aware of is ARIA (amyloid-related imaging abnormalities). ARIA refers to fluid buildup on the brain or small bleeds near the surface of the brain. ARIA does not usually cause any symptoms. If symptoms are present, they may include headache, confusion, dizziness, or balance problems. ARIA is more likely to happen in the first 14 weeks of therapy. In most cases, ARIA will resolve on its own.

How can I get lecanemab?

Your provider will get lecanemab on your behalf to administer at the infusion center. Ask your provider or insurance company if lecanemab is covered.

The Alzheimer's Association is a great resource for additional information about Alzheimer's and treatments. You can visit their website at www.alz.org.

References

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