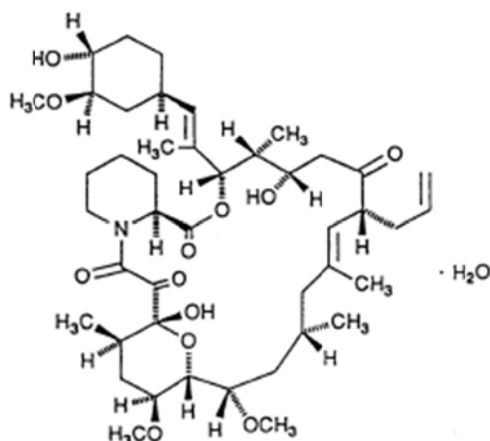


Tacrolimus Sandoz

Tacrolimus capsules 0.5mg, 1mg and 5mg

Tacrolimus

[3S,[3R*[E(1S*,3S*,4S*)],4S*,5R*,8S*,9E,12R*,14R*,15S*,16R*,18S*,19S*,26aR*]]-5,6,8,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,24,25,26,26a-hexadecahydro-5, 19 dihydroxy-3-[2-(4-hydroxy-3-methoxycyclohexyl)-1-methylethenyl]-14, 16-dimethoxy-4,10,12,18-tetramethyl-8-(2-propenyl)-15, 19-epoxy-3H-pyrido[2,1c][1,4] oxazacyclotricosine-1,7,20, 21(4H,23H)-tetrone, monohydrate



CAS [104987-11-3]

Empirical formula: C₄₄H₆₉NO₁₂ · H₂O

MW: 822.05

Presentation

Tacrolimus Sandoz 0.5mg: White to off-white powder filled in size “4” capsule with white coloured opaque body and ivory coloured cap. Each capsule contains 0.5mg tacrolimus.

Tacrolimus Sandoz 1mg: White to off-white powder filled in size “4” capsule with white coloured opaque body and light brown coloured cap. Each capsule contains 1mg tacrolimus.

Tacrolimus Sandoz 5mg: White to off-white powder filled in size “3” capsule with white coloured opaque body and Swedish orange coloured cap. Each capsule contains 5mg tacrolimus.

Uses

Actions

Tacrolimus is a macrolide lactone with potent *in vitro* and *in vivo* immunosuppressive activity. Studies suggest that tacrolimus inhibits the formation of cytotoxic lymphocytes which are regarded as being primarily responsible for graft rejection. Tacrolimus suppresses T-cell activation and T-helper-cell dependent B-cell proliferation, as well as the formation of lymphokines such as interleukins-2 and -3 and γ -interferon and the expression of the interleukin-2 receptor. At the molecular level, the effects of tacrolimus appear to be mediated by binding to a cytosolic protein (FKBP) which is responsible for the intracellular accumulation of the compound. A complex of tacrolimus-FKBP-12, calcium, calmodulin and calcineurin is formed and the phosphatase activity of calcineurin inhibited.

Studies in animals and man have shown that tacrolimus is able to prevent and treat graft rejection

following transplantation of the liver, kidney, and other solid organs.

Pharmacotherapeutic group

Immunosuppressant.

Pharmacokinetics

Absorption

In man tacrolimus has been shown to be able to be absorbed throughout the gastrointestinal tract. Following oral administration of tacrolimus capsules peak concentrations (C_{max}) of tacrolimus in blood are achieved in approximately 1 - 3 hours. In some patients, tacrolimus appears to be continuously absorbed over a prolonged period yielding a relatively flat absorption profile. The mean oral bioavailability of tacrolimus is in the range of 20% - 25%.

After oral administration (0.30 mg/kg/day) to liver transplant patients, steady-state concentrations of tacrolimus were achieved within 3 days in the majority of patients. In healthy subjects, tacrolimus 0.5 mg, tacrolimus 1 mg and tacrolimus 5 mg capsules, have been shown to be bioequivalent, when administered as equivalent dose. The rate and extent of absorption of tacrolimus is greatest under fasted conditions. The presence of food decreases both the rate and extent of absorption of tacrolimus, the effect being most pronounced after a high-fat meal. The effect of a high-carbohydrate meal is less pronounced. In stable liver transplant patients, the oral bioavailability of tacrolimus was reduced when it was administered after a meal of moderate fat (34% of calories) content. Decreases in AUC (27%) and C_{max} (50%), and an increase in t_{max} (173%) in whole blood were evident.

In a study of stable renal transplant patients who were administered tacrolimus immediately after a standard continental breakfast the effect on oral bioavailability was less pronounced. Decreases in AUC (2 to 12%) and C_{max} (15 to 38%), and an increase in t_{max} (38 to 80%) in whole blood were evident. Bile flow does not influence the absorption of tacrolimus.

A strong correlation exists between AUC and whole blood trough levels at steady-state. Monitoring of whole blood trough levels therefore provides a good estimate of systemic exposure.

Distribution and elimination

In man, the disposition of tacrolimus after intravenous infusion may be described as biphasic. In the systemic circulation, tacrolimus binds strongly to erythrocytes resulting in an approximate 20:1 distribution ratio of whole blood/plasma concentrations. In plasma, tacrolimus is highly bound (> 98.8%) to plasma proteins, mainly to serum albumin and α -1-acid glycoprotein. Tacrolimus is extensively distributed in the body. The steady-state volume of distribution based on plasma concentrations is approximately 1300 l (healthy subjects). Corresponding data based on whole blood averaged 47.6 l. Tacrolimus is a low-clearance substance. In healthy subjects, the average total body clearance (TBC) estimated from whole blood concentrations was 2.25 l/h. In adult liver, kidney and heart transplant patients, values of 4.1 l/h, 6.7 l/h and 3.9 l/h, respectively, have been observed. Paediatric liver transplant recipients have a TBC approximately twice that of adult liver transplant patients. Factors such as low haematocrit and protein levels, which result in an increase in the unbound fraction of tacrolimus, or corticosteroid-induced increased metabolism are considered to be responsible for the higher clearance rates observed following transplantation. The half-life of tacrolimus is long and variable. In healthy subjects, the mean half-life in whole blood is approximately 43 hours. In adult and paediatric liver transplant patients, it averaged 11.7 hours and 12.4 hours, respectively, compared with 15.6 hours in adult kidney transplant recipients. Increased clearance rates contribute to the shorter half-life observed in transplant recipients.

Metabolism and biotransformation

Tacrolimus is widely metabolised in the liver, primarily by the cytochrome P450-3A4. Tacrolimus is also considerably metabolised in the intestinal wall. There are several metabolites identified. Only one of these has been shown *in vitro* to have immunosuppressive activity similar to that of tacrolimus. The other metabolites have only weak or no immunosuppressive activity. In systemic circulation only one of the inactive metabolites is present at low concentrations. Therefore, metabolites do not contribute to pharmacological activity of tacrolimus.

Excretion

Following intravenous and oral administration of ¹⁴C-labelled tacrolimus, most of the radioactivity was eliminated in the faeces. Approximately 2% of the radioactivity was eliminated in the urine. Less than 1% of unchanged tacrolimus was detected in the urine and faeces, indicating that tacrolimus is almost completely metabolised prior to elimination: bile being the principal route of elimination.

Pharmacokinetics in special populations

The pharmacokinetics of tacrolimus in special populations have not been studied in detail. See Dosage and Administration for dose adjustments in special populations.

Indications

Primary immunosuppression in liver, kidney, pancreas, kidney-pancreas, lung or heart allograft recipients and rescue use in liver, kidney or other solid organ (heart, lung, pancreas or kidney-pancreas) transplantation, that has either failed conventional immunosuppressive agents, or where such agents are producing intolerable side effects.

Dosage and administration

Adults

The dosage recommendations given below for oral administration should act as a guideline. Tacrolimus doses should be adjusted according to individual patient requirements.

Tacrolimus is normally administered together with other immunosuppressive drugs. Tacrolimus should not be given concurrently with cyclosporin.

If allograft rejection or adverse events occur, alteration of the immunosuppressive regimen should be considered.

Oral administration of tacrolimus should commence as soon as practicable. In some liver transplantation patients, therapy has commenced orally by administering the capsule contents suspended in water via an intranasal gastric tube.

It is recommended that the oral daily dose be taken in two divided doses. The capsules should be swallowed with fluid, preferably water. The capsules should be taken on an empty stomach or at least 1 hour before a meal to achieve maximal absorption.

Primary immunosuppression in liver, kidney, pancreas, lung or heart allograft recipients

LIVER: Administration should start approximately 6 hours after the completion of surgery. When commencing oral therapy, an initial dose of 0.10 - 0.20 mg/kg/day should be administered in two divided doses.

KIDNEY, PANCREAS or KIDNEY-PANCREAS: Administration should start approximately 6 hours after the completion of surgery. When commencing oral therapy, an initial dose of 0.15 - 0.30 mg/kg/day should be administered in two divided doses.

HEART: Administration should start no sooner than 6 hours after the completion of surgery. When commencing oral therapy, an initial dose of 0.075 mg/kg/day should be administered in two divided doses.

LUNG: Administration should start no sooner than 6 hours after the completion of surgery. When commencing oral therapy, an initial dose of 0.10-0.30 mg/kg/day should be administered in two divided doses.

Allograft rejection either resistant to conventional immunosuppressive agents, or where such agents are producing intolerable side effects.

In these patients, tacrolimus treatment should begin with the initial dose recommended for primary immunosuppression in that particular allograft.

Elderly

Experience in the elderly is limited. There is no evidence presently available to suggest that doses should be altered in elderly patients.

Patients with Renal Impairment

No dose adjustment is required. However, careful monitoring of renal function is recommended (see 'Contraindications').

Patients with Liver Impairment

Tacrolimus is extensively metabolised by the liver. In patients with liver impairment, dose reduction is recommended.

Race

In comparison to Caucasians, black patients may require higher tacrolimus doses to achieve similar trough levels.

Gender

There is no evidence that male and female patients require different doses to achieve similar trough levels.

Children

Higher mg/kg doses may be required in children compared with adult to achieve the same tacrolimus blood concentration. Initial oral doses should be 0.15-0.30mg/kg/day as two divided doses.

Monitoring Advice

Monitoring of tacrolimus WHOLE BLOOD concentrations in conjunction with other laboratory and clinical parameters is considered an essential aid to patient management for the evaluation of rejection, toxicity, dose adjustments and compliance. Factors influencing frequency of monitoring include but are not limited to hepatic or renal dysfunction, the addition or discontinuation of potentially interacting drugs and the post-transplant time. Blood concentration monitoring is not a replacement for renal or liver function monitoring and tissue biopsies.

Various assays have been used to measure blood or plasma concentrations of tacrolimus. Comparison of the concentrations in published literature to patient concentrations should be made with care and knowledge of the assay methods employed.

Trough blood concentrations should be measured at 12 hours after a tacrolimus dose. The majority of patients (adults and children) can be successfully managed if the trough (12 hour) blood concentrations are maintained within the following range:

- Liver transplant: 5-20 ng/mL for the first 3 month, 5-15 ng/mL thereafter
- Kidney transplant: 10-20 ng/mL for the first 3 months, 5-15 ng/mL thereafter
- Heart transplant: 10-20 ng/mL for the first 3 months, 5-15 ng/mL thereafter
- Lung transplant: 10-20 ng/mL for the first month, then 5-15 ng/mL thereafter

During the first months post-transplant, monitoring of the following parameters should be undertaken on a routine basis: blood pressure, ECG, visual status, blood glucose levels, electrolytes (particularly potassium), creatinine, BUN, urinary output, haematology parameters, coagulation values, and liver and renal function tests. If clinically relevant changes are seen, adjustment of the immunosuppressive regimen should be considered.

Post-transplant improvement in the condition of the patient may alter the pharmacokinetics of tacrolimus. This should be considered when deciding upon a maintenance regimen.

Conversion between tacrolimus formulations

Differences between oral formulations of tacrolimus can lead to important differences in system exposure to tacrolimus. Inadvertent or unsupervised switching between formulations is unsafe and could lead to graft rejection or increased incidence of side effects. Therefore it is appropriate to prescribe and dispense tacrolimus by trade name, taking care to specify appropriate daily dosing (eg. Tacrolimus Sandoz – twice daily). Patients must only be switched from one tacrolimus formulations to another under the close supervision of a transplant specialist.

Contraindications

Tacrolimus Sandoz is contra-indicated in patients hypersensitive to tacrolimus or other macrolides, or to other ingredients of the capsules.

Warnings and precautions

Warnings

Tacrolimus therapy requires careful monitoring in hospital units equipped and staffed with adequate laboratory and supportive medical resources. The drug should only be prescribed, and changes in immunosuppressive therapy should be initiated, by physicians experienced in immunosuppressive therapy and the management of transplant patients. The physician responsible for maintenance therapy should have complete information requisite for the follow-up of the patient.

Post Transplant Diabetes Mellitus (PTDM)

Post transplant insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (PTDM - use of insulin for 30 or more consecutive days, with < 5 day gap, by patients without a prior history of insulin or non insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus) was reported in 20% (30/151) and 6% (17/281) of tacrolimus treated kidney transplant patients in the U.S. and European randomised trials respectively. The median time to onset of PTDM was 68 days. Insulin dependence was reversible in 15% of these patients at one year and in 50% at two years post transplant. Black and Hispanic patients were found to be at increased risk of development of PTDM in the U.S. trial. The risk benefit ratio should be carefully considered before using tacrolimus in kidney transplant patients with a pre-transplant diabetic condition.

In liver transplantation PTDM was reported in 18% (42/239) and 11% (26/239) of tacrolimus treated patients and was reversible in 45% and 31% of these patients at one year post transplant in the U.S. and European randomised trials respectively.

Insulin-dependent post-transplant diabetes mellitus was reported in 13% (10/75) and 22% (29/132) of tacrolimus-treated heart transplant patients receiving mycophenolate mofetil or azathioprine and was reversible in 30% and 17% of these patients at one year post transplant, in the US and European randomised studies, respectively.

Neurotoxicity

Neurological and CNS disorders have been reported with tacrolimus therapy. Symptoms include tremor, headache, changes in motor function, sensory function or mental status, insomnia, seizures, coma and delirium. Patients experiencing such events should be carefully monitored. In cases of

severe or worsening neurological disorder, adjustment of the immunosuppressive regimen should be considered.

Posterior reversible encephalopathy syndrome (PRES)

Patients treated with tacrolimus have been reported to develop posterior reversible encephalopathy syndrome (PRES). If patients taking tacrolimus present with symptoms indicating PRES such as headache, altered mental status, seizures, and visual disturbances, a radiological procedure (e.g. MRI) should be performed. If PRES is diagnosed, adequate blood pressure and seizure control and immediate discontinuation of systemic tacrolimus is advised. Most patients completely recover after appropriate measures are taken.

Pure red cell aplasia (PRCA)

Cases of pure red cell aplasia (PRCA) have been reported in patients treated with tacrolimus. All patients reported risk factors for PRCA such as parvovirus B19 infection, underlying disease or concomitant medications associated with PRCA.

Renal Impairment

Tacrolimus can cause renal impairment characterized by increases in serum creatinine as a result of a reduced glomerular filtration rate, particularly when used in high doses. These changes have been observed to be dose dependent and improvement have been associated with reduced dosing. The mechanism leading to these changes is not fully understood. Use of tacrolimus with sirolimus in heart transplantation patients in a US study was associated with increased risk of renal function impairment, and is not recommended. Patients with impaired renal function should be monitored closely as the dosage of tacrolimus may need to be reduced.

Care should be taken in using tacrolimus with other nephrotoxic drugs. In particular, tacrolimus should not be used simultaneously with cyclosporin. Tacrolimus or cyclosporin should be discontinued at least 24 hours prior to initiating the other. In the presence of elevated tacrolimus or cyclosporin concentrations, dosing with the other drug usually should be further delayed.

Hyperkalaemia

Mild to severe hyperkalemia was reported in patients treated with tacrolimus, especially in patients with renal impairment. Patients may require treatment, and should avoid high dietary potassium intake. Serum potassium levels should be monitored and potassium-sparing diuretics should not be used during tacrolimus therapy.

Malignancies

As with other potent immunosuppressive compounds, patients treated with tacrolimus are at increased risk of developing lymphomas and other malignancies, particularly of the skin. The risk appears to be related to the intensity and duration of immunosuppression rather than to the use of any specific agent. Exposure to sunlight and ultraviolet (UV) light should be limited by wearing protective clothing and using a sunscreen with a high protection factor.

Lymphoproliferative disorder (LPD) related to Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV) infection has been reported in immunosuppressed organ transplant recipients. In patients switched to tacrolimus, this may be attributable to over-immunosuppression before commencing therapy with this agent. Very young (<2 years), EBV-sero-negative children have been reported to have an increased risk of developing lymphoproliferative disorders. Therefore, in this patient group, EBV serology should be ascertained before starting treatment with tacrolimus. During treatment, careful monitoring is recommended.

Infections

Like other immunosuppressants, tacrolimus predisposes patients to the development of a variety of bacterial, fungal, parasitic and viral infections. Oversuppression of the immune system can also increase susceptibility to opportunistic infections, sepsis and fatal infections. Among these conditions are BK virus associated nephropathy and JC virus associated progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML). These infections are often related to a high total immunosuppressive burden and may lead to serious or fatal conditions that physicians should consider in the differential

diagnosis in immunosuppressed patients with deteriorating renal function or neurological symptoms.

Hypertension

Hypertension is a common adverse effect of tacrolimus therapy. Antihypertensive therapy may be required; the control of blood pressure can be accomplished with any of the common antihypertensive agents. Since tacrolimus may cause hyperkalemia, potassium-sparing diuretics should be avoided. While calcium-channel blocking agents can be effective in treating tacrolimus-associated hypertension, care should be taken since interference with tacrolimus metabolism may require a dosage reduction.

Myocardial hypertrophy

Ventricular hypertrophy or hypertrophy of the septum, reported as cardiomyopathies have been observed in a few cases in association with administration of tacrolimus. Most of these have been reversible, occurring primarily in patients having tacrolimus blood trough levels higher than the recommended level. Mean tacrolimus whole blood trough concentrations during the period prior to diagnosis of myocardial hypertrophy in 20 patients with pre and post treatment echo cardiograms ranged from 10.6 to 53.3 ng/mL in infants (N= 10, age 0.4 to 2 years), 4.0 to 45.7 ng/mL in children (N= 7, age 2 to 15 years) and 10.9 to 24.3 ng/mL in adults (N= 3, age 37 to 45 years). Other factors observed to increase the risk of these clinical conditions are, for example, previously existing heart diseases, corticosteroid usage, hypertension, renal or hepatic dysfunction, and fluid overload. Accordingly, high-risk patients should be monitored, e.g., with echocardiography or ECG. If abnormalities develop, dose reduction of tacrolimus therapy, or change of treatment to other immunosuppressive agent should be considered.

Conversion from cyclosporin

Tacrolimus should not be administered concurrently with cyclosporin as the half-life of the latter may be increased. Synergistic/additive nephrotoxic effects can also occur. Care should be taken when administering tacrolimus to patients who have previously received cyclosporin and when converting patients from cyclosporin- to tacrolimus -based therapy. It is recommended that cyclosporin blood levels are monitored prior to the administration of tacrolimus. The most appropriate time to initiate tacrolimus therapy should be based upon information on cyclosporin blood levels and the clinical condition of the patient. Dosing may be delayed in the presence of elevated cyclosporin levels. Monitoring of cyclosporin blood levels should be continued following conversion as the clearance of cyclosporin may be affected. A 24 hour interval between stopping cyclosporin and starting tacrolimus has been commonly used.

Patients switched to tacrolimus rescue therapy should not be given anti-lymphocyte treatment concomitantly.

Precautions

Pregnancy and lactation

Use in pregnancy (Category C)

In reproduction studies in rats and rabbits, adverse effects on the foetus were observed mainly at dose levels that were toxic to the dams. Tacrolimus at oral doses of 0.32 mg/kg during organogenesis in rabbits was associated with maternal toxicity as well as an increase in the incidence of abortions. At 1.0 mg/kg increased incidences of malformations and developmental variations were also seen (a dose of 1.0 mg/kg resulted in blood exposure approximately equivalent to the exposure achieved after the maximum recommended clinical dose, 0.3 mg/kg, based on AUC). Tacrolimus, at oral doses of 3.2 mg/kg during organogenesis in rats, was associated with maternal toxicity and caused an increase in late resorptions, decreased numbers of live births and decreased pup weight and viability (a dose of 3.2 mg/kg resulted in a blood exposure less than the exposure achieved after the maximum recommended clinical dose, 0.3 mg/kg, based on AUC). Tacrolimus given orally at 1.0 and 3.2 mg/kg to pregnant rats after organogenesis and during lactation was associated with reduced pup weights. No reduction in male or female fertility was evident.

There are no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. The use of tacrolimus during pregnancy has been associated with neonatal hyperkalaemia and renal dysfunction. Tacrolimus should be used during pregnancy only if the potential benefit to the mother justifies potential risk to the foetus.

As tacrolimus may alter the metabolism of oral contraceptives, other forms of contraception should be used. It is advised that patients are counselled regarding the risks of becoming pregnant whilst receiving tacrolimus therapy. In animal studies (rats and rabbits), tacrolimus has been shown to be teratogenic at doses which also demonstrated maternal toxicity. Preclinical and human data show that the drug is able to cross the placenta.

Use in lactation

Tacrolimus is excreted into breast milk. It is therefore recommended that mothers should not breast-feed while receiving tacrolimus.

Lenticular degeneration of the eye was observed in rats treated orally with tacrolimus for at least 12 weeks.

Effects on ability to drive and use machines

Likely to produce minor or moderate adverse effects on the ability to drive or use machinery. Tacrolimus may cause visual and neurological disturbances. Patients treated with tacrolimus who are affected by such disorders should not drive a car or operate dangerous machinery.

Carcinogenicity/Mutagenicity

In chronic, one-year toxicity studies (rats and baboons) and in long-term carcinogenicity studies (mouse, 18 months; rat, 24 months), no signs of a direct tumorigenic potential of tacrolimus were seen. However, as known from data with other immunosuppressive drugs, malignancies such as lymphomas and skin cancers can be expected in patients, and a low incidence has been observed.

Relevant *in vitro* and *in vivo* tests showed no signs of a mutagenic potential of tacrolimus.

Conversion between tacrolimus formulations

Various formulations of tacrolimus are available, including immediate release oral dose forms, prolonged release dose forms and injectable dose forms. Medication errors have resulted in incorrect dosing or unsupervised switching between tacrolimus formulations. This has led to serious adverse events, including graft rejection, or other side effects which could be a consequence of either under exposure or over exposure to tacrolimus. Therefore, it is appropriate to prescribe and dispense tacrolimus by trade name, taking care to specify appropriate daily dosing (eg. Tacrolimus Sandoz – twice daily). Patients should not be changed to another formulation of tacrolimus without specialist supervision; patients may require re-titration and therapeutic drug monitoring (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION).

Adverse effects

The adverse drug reaction profile associated with immunosuppressive agents is often difficult to establish owing to the underlying disease and the concurrent use of multiple medications.

The most commonly reported adverse drug reactions (occurring in > 10% of patients) are tremor, renal impairment, hyperglycaemic conditions, diabetes mellitus, hyperkalaemia, infections, hypertension and insomnia.

Many of the adverse drug reactions stated below are reversible and/or respond to dose reduction. Oral administration appears to be associated with a lower incidence of adverse drug reactions

compared with intravenous use. Adverse drug reactions are listed below in descending order by frequency of occurrence: very common (>1/10); common (>1/100, <1/10); uncommon (>1/1,000, <1/100); rare (>1/10,000, <1/1,000); very rare (<1/10,000, including isolated reports).

Infections and infestations

As is well known for other potent immunosuppressive agents, patients receiving tacrolimus are frequently at increased risk for infections (viral, bacterial, fungal, protozoal). The course of pre-existing infections may be aggravated. Both generalised and localised infections can occur.

Cases of BK virus associated nephropathy, as well as cases of JC virus associated progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML), have been reported in patients treated with immunosuppressants, include tacrolimus.

Neoplasms benign, malignant and unspecified

Patients receiving immunosuppressive therapy are at increased risk of developing malignancies. Benign as well as malignant neoplasms including EBV-associated lymphoproliferative disorders and skin malignancies have been reported in association with tacrolimus treatment.

Blood and lymphatic system disorders

common: anaemia, leukopenia, thrombocytopenia, leukocytosis, red blood cell analyses abnormal

uncommon: coagulopathies, coagulation and bleeding analyses abnormal, pancytopenia, neutropenia

rare: thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura, hypoprothrombinaemia

unknown frequency: agranulocytosis, haemolytic anaemia, pure red cell aplasia (observed during post-marketing)

Immune system disorders

Allergic and anaphylactoid reactions have been observed in patients receiving tacrolimus.

Endocrine disorders

rare: hirsutism

Metabolism and nutrition disorders

very common: hyperglycaemic conditions, diabetes mellitus, hyperkalaemia

common: hypomagnesaemia, hypophosphataemia, hypokalaemia, hypocalcaemia, hyponatraemia, fluid overload, hyperuricaemia, appetite decreased, anorexia, metabolic acidoses, hyperlipidaemia, hypercholesterolaemia, hypertriglyceridaemia, other electrolyte abnormalities

uncommon: dehydration, hypoproteinaemia, hyperphosphataemia, hypoglycaemia

Psychiatric disorders

very common: insomnia

common: anxiety symptoms, confusion and disorientation, depression, depressed mood, mood disorders and disturbances, nightmare, hallucination, mental disorders

uncommon: psychotic disorder

Nervous system disorders

very common:	tremor, headache
common:	seizures, disturbances in consciousness, paraesthesias and dysaesthesias, peripheral neuropathies, dizziness, writing impaired, nervous system disorders
uncommon:	coma, central nervous system haemorrhages and cerebrovascular accidents, paralysis and paresis, encephalopathy, speech and language abnormalities, amnesia
rare:	hypertonia
very rare:	myasthenia

Eye disorders

common:	vision blurred, photophobia, eye disorders
uncommon:	cataract
rare:	blindness

Ear and labyrinth disorders

common:	tinnitus
uncommon:	hypoacusis
rare:	deafness neurosensory
very rare:	hearing impaired

Cardiac disorders

common:	ischaemic coronary artery disorders, tachycardia
uncommon:	ventricular arrhythmias and cardiac arrest, heart failures, cardiomyopathies, ventricular hypertrophy, supraventricular arrhythmias, palpitations, ECG investigations abnormal, heart rate and pulse investigations abnormal, QT prolongation, Torsades de pointes
rare:	pericardial effusion
very rare:	echocardiogram abnormal

Vascular disorders

very common:	hypertension
common:	haemorrhage, thrombotic and ischaemic events, peripheral vascular disorders, vascular hypotensive disorders
uncommon:	infarction, venous thrombosis deep limb, shock

Respiratory, thoracic and mediastinal disorders

common:	dyspnoea, parenchymal lung disorders, pleural effusion, pharyngitis, cough, nasal congestion and inflammations
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uncommon: respiratory failures, respiratory tract disorders, asthma

rare: acute respiratory distress syndrome

Gastrointestinal disorders

very common: diarrhoea, nausea

common: gastrointestinal inflammatory conditions, gastrointestinal ulceration and perforation, gastrointestinal haemorrhages, stomatitis and ulceration, ascites, vomiting, gastrointestinal and abdominal pains, dyspeptic signs and symptoms, constipation, flatulence, bloating and distension, loose stools, gastrointestinal signs and symptoms

uncommon: ileus paralytic, peritonitis, acute and chronic pancreatitis, blood amylase increased, gastrooesophageal reflux disease, impaired gastric emptying

rare: subileus, pancreatic pseudocyst

Hepatobiliary disorders

very common: liver function test abnormal

common: bile duct disorders, cholestasis and jaundice, hepatocellular damage and hepatitis

rare: hepatic artery thrombosis, venoocclusive liver disease

very rare: hepatic failure

Skin and subcutaneous disorders

common: pruritus, rash, alopecias, acne, sweating increased

uncommon: dermatitis, photosensitivity

rare: toxic epidermal necrolysis (Lyell's syndrome)

very rare: Stevens Johnson syndrome

Musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders

common: arthralgia, muscle cramps, pain in limb, back pain

uncommon: joint disorders

Renal and urinary disorders

very common: renal impairment

common: renal failure, renal failure acute, oliguria, renal tubular necrosis, nephropathy toxic, urinary abnormalities, bladder and urethral symptoms

uncommon: anuria, haemolytic uraemic syndrome

very rare: nephropathy, cystitis haemorrhagic

Reproductive system and breast disorders

uncommon: dysmenorrhoea and uterine bleeding

General disorders

common: asthenic conditions, febrile disorders, oedema, pain and discomfort, blood alkaline phosphatase increased, weight increased, body temperature perception disturbed

uncommon: multi-organ failure, influenza like illness, temperature intolerance, chest pressure sensation, feeling jittery, feeling abnormal, blood lactate dehydrogenase increased, weight decreased

rare: thirst, fall, chest tightness, mobility decreased, ulcer

very rare: fat tissue increased

Injury, poisoning and procedural complications

common: primary graft dysfunction

Interactions

Metabolic interactions

Drug(s)	Observation	Clinical Significance
drugs or herbal remedies known to inhibit or induce CYP3A4	Systemically available tacrolimus is metabolised by hepatic CYP3A4. There is also evidence of gastrointestinal metabolism by CYP3A4 in the intestinal wall. Concomitant use may affect the metabolism of tacrolimus and thereby increase or decrease tacrolimus blood levels.	It is therefore recommended to monitor tacrolimus blood levels whenever drugs which have the potential to alter CYP3A metabolism are used concomitantly and to adjust the tacrolimus dose as appropriate in order to maintain similar tacrolimus exposure.

Inhibitors of metabolism

Clinically the following substances have been shown to increase tacrolimus blood levels:

Drug(s)	Observation	Clinical Significance
antifungal agents such as ketoconazole, fluconazole, itraconazole, voriconazole; erythromycin (macrolide antibiotic); HIV protease inhibitors (e.g. ritonavir)	Strong interactions have been observed.	Concomitant use of these drugs may require decreased tacrolimus doses in nearly all patients.
clotrimazole, clarithromycin, josamycin, nifedipine, nocardipine, diltiazem, verapamil, danazol, ethinylestradiol, omeprazole, nefazodone	Weaker interactions have been observed.	Concomitant use of these drugs may require monitoring of tacrolimus levels.
bromocriptine, cortisone, dapson, ergotamine, gestodene, lidocaine, mephentoin, miconazole, midazolam, nilvadipine, norethindrone, quinidine, tamoxifen, (triacetyl)oleandomycin	Potential inhibitor of tacrolimus metabolism <i>in-vitro</i> .	
grapefruit juice	Reports of the blood level of tacrolimus increased.	Concomitant use should therefore be avoided.
lansoprazole	May potentially inhibit CYP3A4-mediated metabolism and thereby increase tacrolimus whole blood concentrations.	
cyclosporin	May potentially inhibit CYP3A4-mediated metabolism and thereby increase tacrolimus whole blood concentrations.	Concomitant use is not recommended. See table – Effect of tacrolimus on the metabolism of other drugs.

Inducers of metabolism

Clinically the following substances have been shown to decrease tacrolimus blood levels:

Drug(s)	Observation	Clinical Significance
rifampicin, phenytoin or St John's Wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)	Strong interactions have been observed.	Increased tacrolimus doses may be required in almost all patients.
phenobarbital	Clinically significant interactions have also been observed.	
maintenance doses of corticosteroids	Tacrolimus blood levels reduced.	
high dose prednisolone or methylprednisolone administered for the treatment of acute rejection	Potential to increase or decrease tacrolimus blood levels.	
Carbamazepine, metamizole, isoniazid	Potential to decrease tacrolimus concentrations.	

Effect of tacrolimus on the metabolism of other drugs:

Drug(s)	Observation	Clinical Significance
drugs known to be metabolised by CYP3A4	Tacrolimus is a known CYP3A4 inhibitor; thus concomitant use of tacrolimus with drugs known to be metabolised by CYP3A4 may affect the metabolism of such drugs.	
cyclosporin	The half-life of cyclosporin is prolonged when tacrolimus is given concomitantly. In addition, synergistic/additive nephrotoxic effects can occur.	For these reasons, the combined administration of cyclosporin and tacrolimus is not recommended and care should be taken when administering tacrolimus to patients who have previously received cyclosporin.
phenytoin	Tacrolimus have been shown to increase the blood level of phenytoin.	
steroid-based contraceptives	Tacrolimus may reduce the clearance of steroid-based contraceptives, leading to increased hormone exposure.	Particular care should be exercised when deciding upon contraceptive measures.
statins	Limited knowledge of interactions between tacrolimus and statins is available. Available data suggests that the pharmacokinetics of statins are largely unaltered by the co-administration of tacrolimus.	
pentobarbital, antipyrine	Animal data have shown that tacrolimus could potentially decrease the clearance and increase the half-life of pentobarbital and antipyrine.	

Other potential interactions that may increase systemic exposure of tacrolimus:

- prokinetic agents such as metoclopramide and cisapride
- cimetidine
- magnesium-aluminium-hydroxide.

Other interactions which have led to clinically detrimental effects:

Drug(s)	Observation	Clinical Significance
drugs known to have nephrotoxic or neurotoxic effects (e.g. aminoglycosides, gyrase inhibitors, vancomycin, cotrimoxazole, NSAIDs, ganciclovir or aciclovir)	Concurrent use of tacrolimus with drugs known to have nephrotoxic or neurotoxic effects may increase these effects.	
amphotericin B and ibuprofen	Enhanced nephrotoxicity has been observed following the administration of amphotericin B and ibuprofen in conjunction with tacrolimus.	
high potassium intake or potassium-sparing diuretics (e.g. amiloride, triamterene or spironolactone)	Tacrolimus treatment may be associated with hyperkalaemia, or may increase pre-existing hyperkalaemia.	Concomitant use should be avoided.
live attenuated vaccines	Immunosuppressants may affect the response to vaccination and vaccination during treatment with tacrolimus may be less effective.	The use of live attenuated vaccines should be avoided.

Protein binding considerations:

Drug(s)	Observation	Clinical Significance
drugs known to have high affinity for plasma proteins (e.g. NSAIDs, oral anticoagulants or oral antidiabetics)	Tacrolimus is extensively bound to plasma proteins.	Possible interactions with other drugs known to have high affinity for plasma proteins should be considered.

Abnormal laboratory test results

None reported.

Food and alcohol

None reported.

Overdosage

Signs and symptoms

In acute oral and intravenous toxicity studies, mortalities were seen at or above the following doses; in adult rats 52x the recommended human oral dose; in immature rats 16x the recommended oral dose; and in adult rats 16x the recommended intravenous human dose (all based on body surface area corrections).

Experience of overdosage in humans is limited.

Early clinical experience (when initial induction doses were 2 -3 times greater than those currently recommended) suggested that symptoms of overdosage may include glucose intolerance, renal,

neurological and cardiac disorders, hyperkalaemia and hypertension. Over immunosuppression may increase risk of severe infections.

Management

Liver function clearly influences all pre- and post-operative pharmacokinetic variables. Patients with failing liver grafts or those switched from other immunosuppressive therapy to tacrolimus should be monitored carefully to avoid overdosage.

No specific antidote to tacrolimus therapy is available. If overdosage occurs, general supportive measures and symptomatic treatment should be conducted.

Based on the poor aqueous solubility and extensive erythrocyte and plasma protein binding, it is anticipated that tacrolimus will not be dialysable. Data on haemoperfusion are not available. In cases of oral intoxication, gastric lavage and/or the use of absorbents (such as activated charcoal) may be helpful.

Pharmaceutical precautions

Instructions for use/handling

Nil.

Incompatibilities

None known.

Shelf life

Unopened container

2 years.

After container first opened

Tacrolimus Sandoz 0.5mg capsules: three months after opening of the aluminium wrapping

Tacrolimus Sandoz 1mg capsules: three months after opening of the aluminium wrapping

Tacrolimus Sandoz 5mg capsules: three months after opening of the aluminium wrapping

After dilution or reconstitution

Not applicable.

Special precautions for storage

Store below 30°C. Store in original container. After opening of the aluminium wrapping, store below 25°C and use within three months. Do not use after printed expiry date.

Medicine classification

Prescription Medicine.

Package quantities

Tacrolimus Sandoz 0.5mg capsules: packs of 100 capsules

Tacrolimus Sandoz 1mg capsules: packs of 100 capsules

Tacrolimus Sandoz 5mg capsules: packs of 50 capsules

Further information

List of excipients

- hypromellose
- lactose
- croscarmellose sodium
- magnesium stearate
- titanium dioxide
- sodium lauryl sulphate
- sorbitan monolaurate
- gelatine
- iron oxide yellow (0.5mg & 1mg capsule only)
- iron oxide red (1mg & 5mg capsule only)
- iron oxide black (1mg capsule only).

Clinical Trials

Liver

The efficacy and safety of a tacrolimus based immunosuppressive regimen following orthotopic liver transplantation was assessed in two prospective, randomised, non-blinded multicentre trials. The active control groups were treated with a cyclosporin based regimen. In a European trial, patients received a tacrolimus-steroid based regimen (n=264) or a cyclosporin-azathioprine-steroid (with or without anti-lymphocyte globulin) based regimen (n=265).

Equivalent graft survival (77.5 vs 72.69%) and patient survival (82.9 vs 77.5%) was seen. Significant reductions were seen in the tacrolimus treated patients for incidence of acute rejection (40.5 vs 49.8%), refractory acute rejection (0.8 vs 5.3%) and chronic rejection (1.5 vs 5.3%). In an American trial patients received a tacrolimus-steroid regimen (n=263) or a cyclosporin (mainly triple therapy) based regimen (n=266). Equivalent graft survival (82 vs 79%) and patient survival (88 vs 88%) rates were observed. Tacrolimus was associated with significant reductions in the incidence of acute rejection (68 vs 76%), steroid resistant rejection (19 vs 36%) and refractory rejection (3 vs 15%).

Kidney

Two randomised, multicentre non-blinded comparative trials were performed in cadaveric kidney transplantation. In an American trial patients received a tacrolimus based (n=205) or cyclosporin based (n=207) regimen. All patients also received maintenance azathioprine and corticosteroids and an induction course of an antilymphocyte antibody preparation. Equivalent graft survival (91.2 vs 87.9%) and patient survival (95.6 vs 96.6%) was seen for the tacrolimus and cyclosporin treated patients respectively. A significantly reduced one year incidence rate of biopsy confirmed acute rejection (30.7 vs 46.4%), moderate to severe acute rejection (10.7 vs 26.6%) and use of antilymphocyte antibody preparation for treatment of rejection (10.7 vs 25.1%) was seen in the tacrolimus treated patients.

A European trial compared triple drug based immunosuppression with tacrolimus or cyclosporin centred regimens, with 303 and 145 patients randomised to the tacrolimus and cyclosporin arms respectively. Equivalent one year graft survival (82.5 vs 86.2%) and one year patient survival (93.0 vs 96.5%) rates were observed, but with significantly reduced one year acute rejection rate (32.3 vs 54.5%), rate of corticosteroid sensitive rejections (24.4 vs 42.1%) and rate of corticosteroid resistant rejections (10.2 vs 20.7%).

Heart

Two open-label, randomized, comparative studies evaluated the safety and efficacy of tacrolimus-based and cyclosporin-based immunosuppression in primary orthotopic heart transplantation. In a Phase 3 study conducted in Europe, 314 patients received a regimen of antibody induction, corticosteroids and azathioprine in combination with tacrolimus or cyclosporin modified for 18 months. In a 3-arm study conducted in the US, 331 patients received corticosteroids and tacrolimus plus sirolimus, tacrolimus plus mycophenolate mofetil (MMF) or cyclosporin modified plus MMF for 1 year.

The in European Phase 3 study, patient / graft survival at 18 months post-transplant was similar between treatment arms, 91.7% in the tacrolimus group and 89.2% in the cyclosporin group. In the US study, patient and graft survival at 12 months was similar with 93.5% survival in the tacrolimus plus MMF group and 86.1% survival in the cyclosporin modified plus MMF group. In the European study, the cyclosporin trough concentrations were above the pre-defined target range (ie 100-200 ng/mL) at Day 122 and beyond in 32-98% of the patients in the cyclosporin treatment arm, whereas the tacrolimus trough concentrations were within the pre-defined target range (ie. 5-15 ng/mL) in 74-86% of the patients in the tacrolimus treatment arm.

The US study contained a third arm of a combination regimen of sirolimus, 2mg per day, and full-dose tacrolimus; however, this regimen was associated with increased risk of wound healing complications, renal function impairment, and insulin dependent post transplant diabetes mellitus, and is not recommended.

Lung

In a prospective, 2-centre, open-label randomized trial, 74 lung transplant patients (aged 20-66 years old) were randomised to tacrolimus-based (n=37) and cyclosporin-based (n=37) immunosuppression. The drugs were given in combination with mycophenolate mofetil and corticosteroids. Tacrolimus was started immediately after transplantation as continuous intravenous infusion at a dose of 0.015mg/kg/day and oral tacrolimus was administered at a dose of 0.1 to 0.3mg/kg/day with subsequent dose adjustments to target trough levels of 12 to 15 ng/mL in the first month and 9 to 12 ng/mL thereafter. The 6-months and 1-year patient survival data was similar in both groups (89% vs 84% and 82% vs 71%, cyclosporin vs tacrolimus respectively). Freedom from acute rejection was comparable at 1 year, 35% in the cyclosporin group and 46% in the tacrolimus group.

Another prospective, randomised, open-label study included 66 patients on tacrolimus versus 67 patients on cyclosporin, aged 20 to 66 years old. The drugs were given in combination with azathioprine and corticosteroids. Tacrolimus was started 6 to 8 hours after transplantation as continuous intravenous infusion at a dose of 0.025 mg/kg/day and oral tacrolimus was administered at a dose of 0.15 mg/kg/day with subsequent dose adjustments to target trough levels of 10 to 20 ng/mL. The 1-year patient survival was 83% in the tacrolimus group and 71% in the cyclosporin group, the 2-year survival rates were 76% and 66%, respectively. The differences between groups were not statistically significant. Freedom from acute rejection after at least 37 weeks follow-up was also comparable (14% in the tacrolimus group and 11.5% in the cyclosporin group).

A number of published, open, uncontrolled studies have examined the use of tacrolimus in lung transplant patients who have developed refractory acute rejection or bronchiolitis obliterans syndrome while receiving cyclosporin-based immunosuppressive regimens. In these studies, conversion from cyclosporin to tacrolimus has been associated with improved clinical outcomes such as reduced frequency of further acute rejection episodes and stabilisation or improvement in declining FEV1 values.

Name and address

Novartis New Zealand Limited
Private Bag 65904 Mairangi Bay
AUCKLAND 0754

Telephone: 0800 354 335

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