

Experimental cancer (and other) medicines

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From: J (leah_at_privacy.net)

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http://www.forbes.com/business/healthcare/2005/01/21/cx_mh_0121newdrugs.html

"Click here for a look at new experimental medicines "

Novartis' Gleevec works wonders for people suffering from chronic myelogenous leukemia, or CML, which causes certain white blood cells to proliferate uncontrollably. But eventually many patients become resistant to the drug. In an early trial conducted at UCLA and M.D. Andersons, Bristol's 354825 compound, however, was able to normalize white blood cell counts in 31 of 36 leukemia patients who had failed or could not tolerate Gleevec. BMS-354825 hits five bad proteins involved in cancer growth, including BCR/ABL, the protein that goes awry in CML. Second-stage trials are just under way. Novartis is testing its own successor to Gleevec, called AMN107.

CP-675, CP-206

Both of these innovative compounds aim to unleash the body's immune system to target cancer cells. They are monoclonal antibodies that help activate a body's so-called killer T-cells to seek out cancer cells and destroy them. In preliminary tests in advanced melanoma, the worst type of skin cancer, each drug produced dramatic tumor shrinkage in at least some patients. CP-675, 206, produced by Pfizer and Abgenix, just began second-stage tests. MDX-010 from Medarex and Bristol-Myers Squibb is in final-stage trials for melanoma."

For years, big drug firms have shied away from antibiotics. But now Wyeth is touting this intravenous antibacterial as one of the gems of its pipeline. The company says Tygacil, the first in a class of bacteria killers called glycyclines, could treat skin and abdominal infections. And whereas doctors often have to choose specific drugs to treat particular bacteria, Tygacil might work against a wide spectrum of bugs. Wyeth said on Dec. 15 that a regulatory application was submitted to worldwide regulatory agencies, including the FDA.

New Drugs To Watch

Matthew Herper and Robert Langreth, 09.20.04, 6:00 AM ET

NEW YORK – Pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies are literally developing hundreds of medicines. We've culled a few dozen that deserve attention. Click on a disease category for a list of experimental medicines being developed to treat related illnesses.

Some medicines have been removed from our list. "The Failures" (see website) fell short in testing, and "The Graduates" (see website) were approved by U.S. regulators.

Failures:

Exanta looked poised to replace Coumadin (warfarin), which for five decades has been the only pill used to prevent blood clots in patients at risk for stroke and other diseases. But issues of liver toxicity may have torpedoed its chances. Originally derived from rat poison, Coumadin interacts negatively with dozens of medicines and many foods. Many patients get only a fraction of the potential benefit. AstraZeneca said that Exanta works at least as well. But, during the FDA approval process, it became clear that Exanta might cause liver failure far more than regulators would ever accept. AstraZeneca pulled the drug's application, and we are removing it from our watch list.

Genasense, Genta

Traditional chemotherapies work by hammering cancer cells so hard that they literally self-destruct. Genasense aimed to block a protein called Bcl-2, which normally prevents cell suicide, making cancer cells more likely to kill themselves. But the results were lackluster. A Food and Drug Administration advisory panel battered this drug in May 2004, stating that it did not benefit skin cancer patients enough to outweigh its side effects. Genta withdrew its new drug application. Despite some data in blood cancers, Genasense's chances of approval anytime soon seem slim, and we are removing it from our watch list.

Aprepritant

This drug has been used as a treatment for nausea caused by chemotherapy, but its real sales potential was as an antidepressant. The compound blocked substance P, a completely different neurotransmitter than the serotonin which is inhibited by traditional antidepressants like Prozac and Celexa. The supposed upshot: fewer side effects, including less sexual dysfunction. Yet it failed to work in late-stage trials. Merck has killed the program.

Genentech's tumor-starving drug, Avastin, works by targeting a single protein. Neovastat, from tiny Canadian biotech Aeterna Laboratories, aimed to starve tumors of their blood supply by knocking out several proteins. But trials involving kidney cancer patients failed to prove that the drug extended survival. Although it is still in development for treating other cancers, we are removing it—for now—from our watch list.