

Re: In need of some support!

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- *From:* "Grateful Deb" <grateful.debNOSPAM@xxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 24 Jan 2009 21:27:27 GMT
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"greyhackles" <greyhackles@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
<news:lv6ln4linncka948olh165n0ugta0hhmp7@xxxxxxxxxxxxx>

On Fri, 23 Jan 2009 21:34:35 GMT, "Grateful Deb"
<grateful.debNOSPAM@xxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Deb: Sorry to hear you're going through this – I have first hand knowledge of how difficult the HCV therapy is when severe anemia is added to the effects of the combo drugs.

I suffered both hemolytic anemia from the Ribavirin and aplastic anemia from the Peg-Interferon suppressing my bone marrow. Within 8 weeks of initiating the combo therapy my hemoglobin level went below 9g/dl, and before my doctor "allowed" me to finally see a hematologist it had gone down to 8.2. The blood doc took one look at my blood work and immediately whacked me with Epogen, and I spent the next 35 weeks on the maximum 60KIU weekly dose. Even so, my hemoglobin level struggled to improve, and never did go back above 10 until the week after I completed the 48th week on the combo drugs.

Are you aware of the reasoning behind the insurance company's refusal to continue providing Procrit? My insurance company wouldn't cover it if my hemoglobin went above 11g/dl (which was moot in my case) and that was almost four years ago. I have since heard of insurance companies that have a 10g/dl cut-off: as the result of over-prescription of these ESA drugs for kidney

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dialysis patients and chemotherapy patients and some resulting unexpected mortality rates, insurance companies may have become even more sensitive about supporting the use of these drugs. You should try to ascertain their rationale.

There are a few different epoetin alfa drugs on the market today. Along with Ortho Biotech's Procrit, there is Amgen's Epogen and Aranesp. Amgen has a patient assistance program that may be able to help you.

See the web page <http://www.amgen.com/patients/assistance.html> or contact Amgen's Reimbursement Connection® Hotline: 1-800-272-9376

Otherwise, hang in there as best as you can. Rest when you can, and drink lots of fluids – it really can make a difference in how you feel.

Good luck, and here's hoping your therapy is successful!

/greyhackles

Thank you for the info. My hemoglobin had gone down to 8.4 when I finally was approved for the Procrit. Now after being on it for 3 months my levels went up over 12. That is the reason my insurance won't continue to pay for the Procrit. My doctor claims my level will have to go back down before they'll pay it again. I've finally started feeling better and don't look forward to going back to how I did feel. On top of that my hair is now falling out in clumps. I really want to stick with this treatment, but I was ready to stop it before I got the Procrit months ago. I wasn't aware of the other drugs you mentioned, I'll look into them. Thank you for your encouragement too. I hope your treatment also has continued to be successful.

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