



RESPONSE TO SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATION - RELATED ENQUIRIES FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

JUNE 2012

In light of concerns expressed to TRB Chemedica (UK) Ltd by 3 members of the public, following a spate of social network postings relating to adverse reactions which may be associated with Viscosupplementation (the term used to describe the intra-articular injection of Hyaluronic Acid, or HA) for the treatment of Osteoarthritis of the knee, TRB Chemedica (UK) Ltd have released the following statement:

A recent article published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*; Viscosupplementation for Osteoarthritis of the Knee: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis (*Ann Intern Med.* 12 June 2012) concluded that “In patients with knee osteoarthritis, Viscosupplementation is associated with a small and clinically irrelevant benefit and an increased risk for serious adverse events”.

However, the data collected for the study in question, the criteria employed for assessing outcomes, and the way that the data was subsequently analysed, leaves considerable margin for error, and thus the potential for misattribution of the phenomena which the study describes as “serious adverse events” solely to the intra-articular injection of a Viscosupplement.

An obvious instance of this misattribution would be to conclude that patients who had reported gastro-intestinal problems while enrolled in a study to determine the effects of Viscosupplementation for osteoarthritis of the knee, experienced those problems as a result of the knee injection. However, it is well elucidated that the majority of OA patients are prescribed systemic analgesics for extended periods of time before

Viscosupplementation is considered or offered as an alternative by their physician. A common side effect of systemic analgesics is gastrointestinal disruption. Therefore, it is equally plausible that a reported incidence of gastro-intestinal upset was caused by systemic analgesic consumption.

While the study under discussion may be of interest to a small number of academic statisticians and computer modelling scientists, it does not add in any meaningful way to the body of work on Viscosupplementation as a clinical option for treating the symptoms associated with Osteoarthritis.

In the United Kingdom, and indeed in many parts of the world, the acknowledged arbiter of what is, and what is not, science based medicine is The Cochrane Library. It is a collection of six databases that contain different types of high-quality, independent evidence to inform healthcare decision-making, and a seventh database that provides information about groups in The Cochrane Collaboration.

In what is considered to be the most authoritative meta-analysis of studies into Viscosupplementation for knee OA, "Viscosupplementation for the Treatment of Osteoarthritis of the Knee", The Cochrane Library, (Oxford), 2005, no. 3, (ID #CD005321) lead author Professor Nicholas Bellamy concluded: "Based on the aforementioned analyses, Viscosupplementation is an effective treatment for OA of the knee with beneficial effects: on pain, function and patient global assessment; and at different post injection periods but especially at the 5 to 13 week post injection period." Overall, the aforementioned analyses support the use of the HA class of products in the treatment of knee OA.

If patients have any concerns regarding the treatment they have received, or have been recommended to receive, for the symptoms associated with knee osteoarthritis, it is recommended that they discuss their treatment options and raise any questions they may have with their physician or specialist clinician.