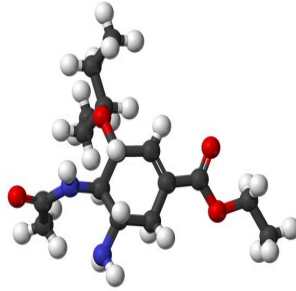


Oseltamivir Effective against Influenza



This year, the flu vaccine is not considered to be a good match for the current strain of influenza. Keeping that in mind, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended the use of antiviral drugs to help treat it.

Antivirals have often been criticised for being ineffective but new evidence indicates that they can alleviate symptoms and prevent respiratory complications.

Researchers at the University of Michigan, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the University of Alabama have found that Oseltamivir (brand name: Tamiflu) is effective for influenza and shortens the duration of symptoms by about one day.

They conducted meta-analysis of data from published and unpublished clinical trials from 1997 to 2001. More than 4300 patients were involved in these trials, out of which half were treated with Oseltamivir. The findings have been published in "The Lancet."

Oseltamivir is a neuraminidase inhibitor and blocks the enzyme activity that occurs with Type A and Type B influenza viruses. A large number of patients involved in these clinical trials had influenza Type A with the strain H3N2, the same strain that is affecting the US this year.

The drug was prescribed at an adult dose of 75mg twice a day within 36 hours following development of the flu symptoms. The findings showed that the drug reduced the duration of the illness by 21 percent. The drug also reduced respiratory infections by 44 percent and decreased hospital admission by 63 percent. Symptom alleviation occurred at 98 hours on average as compared to 123 hours with placebo. The most common side effects noted with the drug include nausea and vomiting.

According to Dr. Arnold Monto, the co-author of this study and Thomas Francis Jr. Collegiate Professor of Public Health at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, "This is the first patient-level analysis of how well this drug works. Previous research has questioned its success and use in light of the side effects of nausea and vomiting, but the other studies combined those infected with influenza and those without, which diluted the positive effect in treatment."

Source: University of Michigan

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