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Biologic Therapies Improve Quality of Life for Arthritis Patients!

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Over the past two decades there have been tremendous advances in the treatment of several forms of arthritis which affect millions of Americans. Diseases including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, gout, and systemic lupus can cause serious health issues if not controlled. Rheumatologists now have more therapeutic choices for patients who do not respond to traditional disease modifying therapies. This newer class of medications is commonly referred to as "biologic therapies". As a result of the use of these therapies, most patients now have a very good chance of disease remission.

The Biologics

There are a number of biologic drugs available. The right biologic drug for a particular patient depends on the disease being treated and multiple other factors which are unique to each person's case. Some examples of approved biologic drugs include:

- Remicade (infliximab)
- Orencia (abatacept)
- Cimzia (certolizumab)
- Humira (adalumimab)
- Enbrel (etanercept)
- Simponi (golumimab)
- Actemra (toxilizumab)
- Rituxan (rituximab)
- Krystexxa (pegloticase)
- Benlysta (belimumab)
- Privigen (intravenous immunoglobulin)
- Tysabri (natalizumab)

What are the biologics?

Biologics are drug therapies which are designed to specifically target and inhibit a part of the immune system which is over-active. This type of therapy allows for more powerful and focused treatment of the immune system dysfunction. Biologics may be used alone in some cases, but they are often given in combination with other oral arthritis medications. Because each person has very individual needs, the decision about whether to start or change a biologic

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medication is best made in consultation with a rheumatologist.

What diseases do biologics treat?

The most common forms of inflammatory arthritis are the autoimmune diseases Rheumatoid Arthritis and Psoriatic Arthritis. Many biologics including Remicade, Humira, Enbrel, Cimzia, Simponi, Rixtuxan, Actemra and Orencia are indicated to treat moderate to severe Rheumatoid Arthritis, and all of these medications with the exception of Orencia, Rituxan, and Actemra are indicated for the treatment of moderate to severe Psoriatic Arthritis. Ankylosing Spondylosis is a less common inflammatory arthritis, for which Remicade, Humira, Enbrel, and Simponi are indicated. Remicade, Humira, and Cimzia are also indicated to treat inflammatory bowel disease including Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis.

Gout is a different kind of inflammatory arthritis which is caused by the deposition of needle shaped crystals in both small and large joints. This disease affects millions of Americans, and it can be extremely painful and debilitating. Many people will respond to oral medications for gout, but in cases of severe disease or allergy to oral medications, Krystexxa is a new biologic option.

A recent addition to the available biologics is Benlysta. This medication is the first biologic medication

approved for systemic lupus erythematosus, and the first medication approved for the disease in more than thirty years! This is an exciting new option for lupus patients not clinically controlled on oral medications.

Multiple Sclerosis is a degenerative neurologic disorder, for which there is no known cure. There are medical options for treatment which include Tysabri and Privgen, both of which can significantly decrease symptoms in some patients.

How are biologics administered?

Biologics are usually given by self-injection or by intravenous infusion. In cases where the medications are given in an infusion center, the length of time it takes to receive the medication can range from 10 minutes to several hours. Infusions can be given in a hospital environment or in an outpatient infusion center.

Infusion Services at ARA

Arthritis and Rheumatism Associates, P.C. (ARA) has a well-established clinical infusion center in each of our four locations. Each individual infusion center is overseen by our dedicated physicians and staffed by experienced, caring registered nurses with infusion experience. Infusions are given Monday through Friday during regular business hours, with a flexible appointment schedule. While the infusions are given, patients can rest, read, watch a movie, or work on their computer without interruption in a friendly, safe environment.

Understanding your therapeutic options helps you and your physician work together in improving your health. Talk to your rheumatologist about whether infusion therapies are right for you.