

March 2022

UK Updates

Starting with the TREATWOLFRAM clinical trial, as you know, this is an international, randomised controlled trial of sodium valproate to delay or prevent the progression of vision loss in Wolfram.

As you know, participation was completed on 1st Nov 2021 with recruitment of 63 people who have kindly consented to take part. These include 25 children and adults recruited in Birmingham UK, 15 children and adults in Paris and Montpellier, France, 18 children and adults in Almeria, Spain, and 5 children in Lodz, Poland. The youngest participant is 8 years, and the oldest, 61 years. We have a good spread of participants from diverse ethnic groups.

This is fantastic support from the whole European community, especially Dr Renuka Dias, Dr Ben Wright in the UK for children and adults respectively. Wolfram Syndrome UK are generously supporting UK participants to travel to Birmingham.

This is the first international trial of a treatment for Wolfram. Most importantly, we have the right number of participants to give a definite answer to the question: does sodium valproate treatment slow disease progression in Wolfram?

We are now in the follow-up phase, and the study will finish in November 2024. We anticipate the outcome of the trial soon after that. We have had extensive and passionate discussions within the Trial Steering Group about whether we can offer sodium valproate to participants when they complete the trial, while we wait for the results. For the UK, we have to follow our regulatory authority advice that we may not prescribe sodium valproate outside its licensed indications until we know it is safe in Wolfram, and effective in Wolfram. I know this will be disappointing for some; I hope the community will understand that our priority always has to be to keep people safe.

I know I can say on behalf of all the clinical trial team that we really appreciate the time and effort that people are making to take part in this study. This is a lengthy process and can be frustrating. However, by having a gold standard clinical trial, we will have really strong evidence to support the adoption of the treatment into the clinic, if it works.

We have an independent Data Monitoring Committee that meet every 6 months. They look at all the data and know who is taking the treatment and who is taking the placebo. If that group see either a really strong signal that the medicine has stopped the disease process, or alternatively that there is no evidence that it works, they can stop the trial immediately.

The data monitoring committee has just met (February 2022), and I am pleased to report that they had no safety concerns, and are happy for the clinical trial to continue.

In other news, my colleague Professor Pietro Maffei, in University of Padua, Italy, has put together a research proposal to the European Union (Horizon Europe competition) to develop future clinical trials of medicines for Wolfram, Alstrom and Bardet Biedl syndromes.

He has kindly involved our Birmingham laboratory team (Dr Malgosia Zatyka, Dr Sovan Sarkar). One of the candidate medicines will be the diabetes treatment Liraglutide (also called Victoza). This is a 2 stage application, and we hope to hear the outcome of the first stage by May 2022.

I hope we can meet soon, and in any case at the family conference in October

With best wishes to all

Timothy Barrett

Chief Investigator TreatWolfram clinical trial

On behalf of all investigators and Cancer Research UK Clinical Trials Unit