PEER-REVIEWED FEATURE

Difelikefalin: Adis Evaluation

Clinical Considerations

- Administered as an intravenous bolus injection at the end of each haemodialysis treatment
- Reduces itch intensity and potentially improves itch-related quality of life in patients with moderate-to-severe pruritus
- Generally well tolerated, with most treatment-emergent adverse events being of mild or moderate severity

Plain Language Summary

Background and rationale

- Chronic kidney disease (CKD)-associated pruritus (itching that is directly related to advanced CKD and/or end-stage kidney failure) is common in patients undergoing haemodialysis and negatively impacts quality of life
- Imbalances in endogenous opioid receptor activity may drive CKD-associated pruritus
- Difelikefalin (Kapruvia®; Korsuva™) targets peripheral kappa opioid receptors and, in the USA and Europe, is the first drug to be specifically approved for the treatment of moderate-to-severe pruritus associated with CKD in patients undergoing haemodialysis

Clinical findings

- Difelikefalin therapy reduces itch severity in this frail patient population, based on results from clinical trials
- Difelikefalin may also improve itch-related quality of life and quality of sleep
- Common adverse events in recipients include diarrhoea, dizziness and nausea, which rarely require treatment discontinuation

Conclusion

Effective and generally well tolerated, difelikefalin is a promising emerging treatment for moderate-to-severe pruritus associated with CKD