STUDENTS' CORNER
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sabizabulin - an unprecedented yet effective drug against COVID-19

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Madam, the severe acute respiratory distress syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which causes coronavirus illness (COVID-19), was initially reported to WHO on December 31, 2019, and there after declared a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. The virus has infected 563 million people and killed 6.3 million as of July 2022. [1] "The virus remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern," said the World Health Organization's chief. Most infected people get mild to moderate respiratory disease and recover without therapy. However, WHO studies show that people with underlying medical complications such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop severer illnesses from this infection. Acute respiratory distress syndrome, a long-term lung injury that requires external oxygen, is one of the leading causes of mortality in COVID-19.[2] Several effective vaccines and antivirals have been approved to treat and prevent COVID-19. As new strains emerge and natural immunity wanes, the population, particularly immunocompromised individuals, stand an increased risk of severe sickness and death due to this disease.

In the interim analysis, 150 hospitalised patients were randomized to receive 9 mg of oral sabizabulin or placebo once daily for 21 days, regardless of standard care treatment, baseline WHO scores, age, comorbidities, or geographic location. On day 60, the primary efficacy outcome of the research, a statistically significant relative reduction of 55.2% in mortality was seen in the sabizabulin-treated group compared to the placebo group. Sabizabulin also reduced the number of days spent in the ICU, on mechanical ventilation, and in the hospital by 43%, 49%, and 26%, respectively, when compared to the placebo group. Veru, the manufacturer of Sabizabulin, has requested an Emergency Use Authorization from the Food and Drug Administration because of the drug's extraordinary potency.[3]

Pakistan's weak healthcare infrastructure has already been challenged by COVID-19. Pakistan's hospital capacity, particularly critical care facilities, is insufficient. Given the severity of the situation in the region, where 1.5 million cases and over 30,000 deaths have been verified so far and with the number of active cases exceeding 10,000 once again,[1] it is critical to continue exploring this drug. However, before the drug is made available to the public, its safety and efficacy profile needs to be studied more rigorously. Nonetheless, the study's results convincingly demonstrate sabizabulin's effectiveness as a COVID-19 treatment in hospitalized patients.

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