

New Drugs for Hepatitis C Treatment

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In April 2011, the Food and Drug Administration approved two new drugs for hepatitis C virus (HCV) therapy - Boceprevir (*Victrelis*, manufactured by Merck) and Teleprevir (*Incivek*, manufactured by Vertex). These two drugs are protease inhibitors designed to specifically halt the replication of hepatitis C virus directly. They are used as an addition to standard HCV combination therapy of interferon and ribavirin. The extensive research in the past several years has demonstrated that the addition of these two drugs to the standard therapy would significantly enhance the cure rate and shorten the duration of hepatitis C virus treatment. The addition of these drugs will mainly benefit patients with HCV genotype I, which is the most common type of HCV infection in the US and the most difficult type to treat. The cure rate has increased about 20% and the duration of treatment has decreased to six months from the previous one year.

It is an exciting breakthrough for HCV treatment. HCV was considered incurable 30 years ago, became partially curable in the early 90's and now a largely curable medical condition. The latest breakthrough is made possible by the collective efforts of scientific researchers around the world who have been diligently working to study all aspects of HCV in search of its cure.

HCV treatment is not an easy therapy for patients. The side effects can be hard on the patients, which often require very close monitoring by HCV expert and other medical sub-specialists like hematologist and psychiatrist, therefore local treatment is preferred. There is a high dropping rate during the treatment because of the side effects. The addition of these two new drugs makes the side effects even more challenging. Both Boceprevir (*Victrelis*) and Teleprevir (*Incivek*) have been reported to make anemia worse, which might be corrected by Erythropoietin (a hormone which stimulates production of red-blood cells). Teleprevir (*Incivek*) can cause more skin rash and itch but is more potent in HCV treatment.

Both Boceprevir (*Victrelis*) and Teleprevir (*Incivek*) are available in our clinic and we have started to treat patients with HCV genotype I. If you are interested in HCV treatment, please contact Dr. Jeff Ye, North Atlanta Medical & Digestive Care at 770-346-0900. We can help!