

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**About review article “Biological agent in the treatment of Rheumatoid arthritis”
(Journal Vol. 29. No. 1, 2011 Page 27-31)**

To
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of Bangladesh College of Physician and Surgeon

The review article titled “Biological Agents in the Treatment of Rheumatoid arthritis” (January Vol. 29, No. 1, 2011 page 27-31) in the previous issue of your journal was an interesting read. The context covered a lot of information regarding the biologics used in RA and had a lot of information regarding individual agents on how to administer and their side effects. In spite of we believe that a few more inclusion and clarification would have been nice.

The article reviewed a number of papers but it was not mentioned what were the selection criteria for the articles the authors went through. The search criteria and the mesh or key words used for generating the search along with the data bases such as Pubmed or Cochrane were also not mentioned.

Comparison of DMARD and Biologics has been looked into in a number of studies. Where some were concern with the appropriate timing of starting these agents, others were concern with the suitable candidates for biologics. Comparison of individual biologics with each other has also been seen in a good number of articles.’ The authors didn’t give enough information in this regard in the discussion.

The criteria for starting biologics in RA patient had been set by ACR which has changed over the years and the recent guideline came in 2008 suggesting set criteria for early, intermediate and late RA. In early RA Anti-TNF α are only advocated to a patient with high (stage C) disease activity and had never received DMARD, While in intermediate group it is advised in whom a prior MTX therapy showed a poor response.²

The article overlooked a very important perspective of biologics in our context, which are the chances of reactivation of tuberculosis and other infections with

the use of certain biologics and ways to minimize them.

Overall it was a good informative article with the exception of the omissions made above.

Dr. Md. Titu Miah & Dr. K.F.M. Ayaz

Assistant Professor
Department of Medicine, Dhaka Medical College.

Reference:

1. Current evidence for the management of rheumatoid arthritis with biological disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs: a systematic literature review informing the EULAR recommendations for the management of RA. Nam J L, Winthrop K L, van Vollenhoven R F, Pavelka K, et al. *Ann Rheum Dis* 2010;69:976-986.
2. American College of Rheumatology 2008 Recommendations for the Use of Nonbiologic and Biologic Disease-Modifying Antirheumatic Drugs in Rheumatoid Arthritis Saag K G, Teng G G, Patkar N M, Anuntiyo J, et al. *Arthritis & Rheumatism (Arthritis Care & Research)* 2008; 59 (6) :762-784

Author’s Reply

It was nice to get a feed back on our paper. In our review we were mainly concern with the dosage schedule and administration of the drugs. The basic reason behind was to make our physicians accustomed to these agents. The comparison with DMARDs was not in the purview of our review article though it’s true that comparison data would have been more informative and helpful to our readers. Regarding the search criteria we mainly went through the pubmed using the key words ‘biological agents’, ‘rheumatoid arthritis’, ‘management’. The articles were chosen based on the context and mostly clinical trials were reviewed. Guidelines were also taken into account. We had tried to cover those areas of management of RA that is still in its infancy in Bangladesh and hope that it would generate enough enthusiasm among the aspiring physicians to come forward and take steps to implement studies on biological agents in our country. Finally we would like to thank you for the additional information you have provided in your letter.

Dr. SM Kamal & Prof. MA Bakar

Assoc. Professor, Medicine Khulna Medical College & Professor of Medicine Khulna Medical College