

Hypogonadal patients with Crohn's disease benefit from treatment with testosterone – data from an ongoing, long-term, observational registry study

Farid Saad^{1,2}, Mahmoud Nasser³, Gheorghe Doros⁴, Winfried Kurtz⁵, Ahmad Haider⁶, Louis Gooren⁷

¹Bayer Pharma, Global Medical Affairs Andrology, Berlin, Germany

²Gulf Medical University School of Medicine, Ajman, United Arab Emirates

³Dpt of Gastroenterology, University of Aleppo, Aleppo, Syria

⁴Dpt of Epidemiology and Statistics, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, MA, USA

⁵Dpt Int Med, Klinikum Bremerhaven, Bremerhaven, Germany

⁶Private Urology Practice, Bremerhaven, Germany

⁷VU medical Center, Department of Internal Medicine, Endocrine section, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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Introduction: Anti-inflammatory effects of testosterone (T) have been demonstrated in numerous studies. Effects of T in auto-immune models have been studied experimentally (Fijak M et al., J Immunol 2011, 186: 5162-5172). We previously reported effects of two years of T treatment in a small group of hypogonadal men with Crohn's disease (Haider A et al., Horm Mol Biol Clin Invest 2010; 2(3): 287–292).

Methods: In a prospective, cumulative, observational registry study, 73 hypogonadal men with Crohn's disease (n=71) and Colitis ulcerosa (n=2) with T \leq 12 nmol/L from 2 centers in Bremerhaven, Germany and Aleppo, Syria received treatment with parenteral testosterone undecanoate every 12 weeks following an initial 6-week interval for up to 75 months. 12 hypogonadal men of similar age with Crohn's disease did not receive T and served as control group (CTRL). In total, 73 men received T and 12 hypogonadal men remained untreated. The Crohn's Disease Activity Index (CDAI) was assessed every 3 months. Highly sensitive C-reactive protein (hsCRP) and leukocyte count were measured. The Aging Males' Symptoms Scale (AMS) was used as a quality of life (QoL) instrument. 5 patients in the T group had osteoporosis.

Results: T levels at baseline were 9.37 ± 1.08 nmol/L in the T group and 10.75 ± 0.36 in CTRL. During treatment, T increased to 15.72 ± 0.53 and slightly declined in CTRL. The CDAI decreased from 231.3 ± 35.96 to 75.0 in the T group and increased from 196.25 ± 7.11 to 210.0 in CTRL. hsCRP (mg/dl) levels at baseline were 14.01 ± 9.18 in the T group vs 7.3 ± 0.98 in CTRL. They decreased to 2.63 ± 1.91 after 72 months in the T group and increased to 13.7 in CTRL. Leukocyte count decreased from 12.42 ± 2.46 to $5.97 \pm 0.51 \times 10^3$ cells/ μ l in the T group and remained unchanged in CTRL (from 11.38 ± 1.29 to 12.7). AMS improved from 49.47 ± 8.11 in the T group to 17.33 ± 0.58 . In CTRL, AMS remained unchanged from 47.17 ± 1.03 at baseline to 48 at the end of the observation period. 5 patients in the T group had osteoporosis. T-scores in these patients improved from approximately -2.9 to approximately -1.8.

Conclusion: Normalisation of T in hypogonadal men with Crohn's disease led to improvements of the CDAI, hsCRP , a reduction of leukocytes and an improvement of QoL. The mechanism of this improvement may be through anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive effects of testosterone, reducing chronic inflammation of the intestinal wall in Crohn's Disease.