Session One

REVIEW OF DRUGS FOR THE TREATMENT OF SKIN DISEASE (2005)

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8:05 am – 8:25 am
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Perhaps the most exciting news of the past year is that biologics for treating psoriasis have arrived. The most recent of these is efalizumab, which was granted approval by Health Canada in late October. As clinicians, we now have a choice in antipsoriatics. And we also have some answers regarding payment for these drugs, with some provinces and insurance plans willing to cover their costs. Isotechnika's calcineurin inhibitor for treating psoriasis, which is in late stage clinical trials, will also be discussed. As well the potential benefit of infliximiab will be reviewed.

A number of innovative drug companies focusing on the field of dermatology have come on the scene. One of them, Barrier Therapeutics, is a new and very viable pharmaceutical company with a pipeline of drugs in the areas of antifungals, acne, psoriasis, and seborrheic dermatitis. Barrier recently acquired the Canadian distribution rights for eflornithine as a treatment for unwanted facial hair.

Over the past year a number of new therapeutics advances have been reported. Among those discussed will be QLT's new gel formulation of dapsone for treating acne, and Ciba Speciality Chemicals' new class of UV absorber, bisoctriazole. After many years, we now also have an effective alternative to DEET. Picaridin (KBR 3023) has been endorsed by the CDC in Atlanta and is marketed by Spectrum Brands as Cutter Advanced. Also mentioned will be NUCRYST Pharmaceuticals topical nanocrystalline silver formulation for treating atopic dermatitis, which is now in Phase 3 trials. It is worth noting that the nanotechnology used in creating this drug was developed in Alberta.

In February 2005, the FDA issued patient warnings targeting the immunomodulators. A number of respected and influential individuals within dermatology have actively disagreed with the FDA's recommendations. Regulatory authorities are also

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currently reviewing the safety profile of a drug long-used in the treatment of hyperpigmentary disorders, hydroquinone, and there are already indications that its use could restricted as has happened in Europe.

And finally, two innovative vaccines will also be outlined. In the coming months, Merck is releasing a vaccine that has been shown to be very effective in combatting HPV infections, including cervical cancer and warts. As well as a new vaccine for treating herpes zoster and post-zoster neuralgia.