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UTILITY OF GENERIC ANTIRETROVIRAL MEDICATION IN THE FIRST WORLD: RESULTS OF A VOLUNTARY 24-WEEK PILOT STUDY

C. Tornero, E . Soler (1), A. Santamaria , S.Rull.
Internal Medicine and Phamacy (1),
Hospital Francisco de Borja, Gandia (Valencia) Spain.
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BACKGROUND: This study investigated the acceptance, tolerance and efficacy of the change to generic antiretroviral treatment (GAT), in a pilot group of well controlled HIV-infected patients.

METHODS: We proposed the replacement of COMBIVIR® with lamivudine EPIVIR® 300 mg/24 h + generic zidovudine 300 mg /12 h (COMBINOFARMA®) in a group of well controlled patients with very high treatment adherence rates, until 20 accepting patients were recruited. Every three months we recorded the variations in tolerance of the new GAT regimen, the immune and virological course, and patient desire to continue participating in the project.

RESULTS: The change to generic antiretrovirals was proposed to 26 patients until acceptance was recorded for 20. All but one patient who presented a “blip” maintained virological control after three months, with scant variations in tolerance. After 6 months virological control was maintained in all but one patient who abandoned treatment due to reasons unrelated to the new medication. The proposed treatment change implied a 40% decrease in the cost of the non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NNRTIs).

COMMENTS: The results have an implication for both prescribing physicians and patients. The use of GAT offers the possibility of improving HAART efficiency in a highly selected group of patients

Key words: Generic Drugs, Antiretroviral therapy