Case Report

The Allergenic Role of the Drug Excipient in a Case of Allergy in Pcsk-9 Inhibitor

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Submitted: 25 Sep 2020; Accepted: 01 Oct 2020; Published: 08 Oct 2020

Abbreviations
CVD: Cardiovascular disease
PCSK-9: Proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9
LDL-R: Low-density lipoprotein receptor
LDL: Low-density lipoprotein
DM: Diabetes Mellitus
HTN: Arterial hypertension
COD: Coronary artery disease
PCI: Percutaneous intervention
ER: Emergency room
BP: Blood Pressure
Q2W: Every 2 weeks
QD: once a day

Introduction
Hyperlipidemia is a well-established risk factor for the development of cardiovascular disease (CVD) [1]. Proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 (PCSK-9) inhibitors are novel drugs in use against hyperlipidemia [2]. The gene for this enzyme is encoded by the PCSK9 gene that is located on chromosome 1. This gene contains one of 27 loci associated with increased risk of coronary artery disease [3, 4]. PCSK-9 is expressed in many tissues and it has the ability to bind to low-density lipoprotein receptor (LDL-R) and to reduce its number on the extracellular side of cell membranes. This results in a decreased ability of the cells to uptake low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and in this way, in a higher concentration of LDL in blood circulation [5]. Therefore, blocking PCSK-9 can lower blood LDL concentrations thus having an important medical importance [6]. We present a case of allergy on Alirocumab only, one of PCSK-9 inhibitors.

Case Report
A 67-year old patient with a previous medical history of hepatitis C, gastric ulcer, diabetes mellitus (DM), arterial hypertension (HTN), hyperlipidemia, coronary artery disease (CAD), with successful percutaneous intervention (PCI) with stent placement. On examination she was afebrile with sitting blood pressure of 117/68 mmHg, sitting heart beats of 94/min and regular, respiratory rate of 20 respirations per minute body mass index of 25.3 kg/m2. Physical exam revealed planter tendon xanthomas, bilateral corneal arcus, Achilles tendon xanthomas which was suggestive of familial hypercholesterolemia. Lab workup is shown in tables 1, 2 and 3. A significant increase in LDL cholesterol was evident of the past 15 years, despite the use of Atorvastatin 80mg which was switched to Rosuvastatin 40 mg and Ezetimibe 10mg for past 4 years [7, 8].

Table 1: Lipid Panel

| Component          | Ref Range | 12/05/16 | 12/10/16 | 07/06/17 | 28/03/18 | 07/11/19 | 19/06/20 |
|--------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Cholesterol        | 125-200 mg/dL | 445      | 268      | 258      | 293      | 173      | 326      |
| Triglycerides      | 35-135 mg/dL  | 118      | 97       | 174      | 155      | 121      | 164      |
| HDL Cholesterol    | >60 mg/dL    | 38       | 66       | 54       | 48       | 62       | 50       |
| LDL Cholesterol    | 35-120 mg/dL | 373      | 182      | 169      | 213      | 89       | 243      |
| CHOL/HDL Ratio     | <4.0        | 9.3      | 4.1      | 4.7      | 6.1      | 2.8      | 6.5      |
| LDL/HDL Ratio      | <2.5        | 7.8      | 2.8      | 3.1      | 4.4      | 1.4      | 4.8      |
It is evident that the LDL Cholesterol levels during these years had hit a base level. The need for another more potent therapy was evident. Therefore, a PCSK-9 Inhibitor – Alirocumab 150mg SC Q2W was prescribed on May/2018. After the first dose, an urticarial eruption had occurred within 6 hours and resolved within 24 hours. It was proved that this general urticarial eruption was caused by Alirocumab after the second dose of this medication 4 weeks later. We switched it to Evolocumab 150 mg SC Q2W. The allergic reaction did not occur with Evolocumab. The complete blood and platelet count is shown in tables 2 and 3.

**Table 2: Complete Blood Count**

| Result               | Value | Ref Range          |
|----------------------|-------|--------------------|
| White Blood Cell     | 4.6   | 4.5-11.0 x 10^3/uL |
| Red Blood Cell       | 4.35  | 3.70-5.50 x 10^6/uL|
| Hemoglobin           | 12.6  | 11.7-15 g/dL       |
| Mean Corp. Volume    | 86.8  | 79.0-98.0 fl       |
| Mean Corp. Hemoglobin| 29.0  | 27.0-32.0 pg       |
| Mean Corp. Hgb. Conc.| 33.4  | 32.0-35.0 g/dL     |
| Red Distrib. Width   | 12.9  | 11.5-15.0 %        |
| Platelets            | 224   | 150-450 x10^3/uL   |
| Mean PLT Volume      | 10.5  | 7.4-12.0 fl        |
| Neutrophil %         | 49.7  | 40.0-78.0 %        |
| Lymphocyte %         | 43.2  | 15.0-50.0 %        |
| Monocyte %           | 5.1   | 2.0-11.0 %         |
| Eosinophil %         | 1.6   | 0.0-5.0 %          |
| Basophil %           | 0.4   | 0.0-5.0 %          |
| Neutrophil #         | 2.3   | 1.9-8.0 x 10^3/uL  |
| Lymphocyte #         | 2.0   | 1.0-4.5 x 10^3/uL  |
| Monocyte #           | 0.2   | 0.2-1.0 x 10^3/uL  |
| Eosinophil #         | 0.1   | 0.0-0.6 x 10^3/uL  |
| Basophil #           | 0.0   | 0.0-0.2 x 10^3/uL  |

**Table 3. Comprehensive Metabolic Panel**

| Result              | Value | Reference Range          |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Hemoglobin A1C      | 7.7   | 4.0 – 6.0 %              |
| Bilirubin Total     | 0.3   | 0.1 – 1.2 mg/dL          |
| Calcium             | 9.6   | 8.5 – 10.5 mg/dL         |
| Creatinine          | 0.63  | 0.50 – 1.10 mg/dL        |
| Glucose             | 101   | 60 – 100 mg/dL           |
| Alkaline Phosphatase| 73    | 38 – 126 u/L             |
| Potassium           | 4.9   | 3.5 – 5.2 mEq/L          |
| Protein Total       | 7.0   | 6.0 – 8.3 g/dL           |
| Sodium              | 139   | 135 – 145 mEq/L          |
| AST (SGOT)          | 14    | 1-35 u/L                 |
| Urea Nitrogen       | 15    | 6-23 mg/dL               |
| CO2 Total           | 26.9  | 22.0 – 32.0 mEq/L        |
| ALT (SQPT)          | 10    | 1.45 U/l                 |
| EGFR                | >60.00| Ml/min/1.73m             |
**Management**

The patient was started on Evolocumab 150mg SC Q2W and Rosuvastatin 40 mg + Ezetimibe 10 mg orally QD. Cardiologic therapy that consists of Ranolazine 500 mg tablet, Metoprolol 100 mg, Ramipril 5mg and Aspirin 81 mg was continued.

**Discussion**

Treating LDL Cholesterol is key factor to prevent atherosclerosis, the target of LDL Cholesterol on population with cardiovascular risk factors is suggestive to be less than 50mg/dL. Currently there are two PCSK-9-i in the USA that are FDA approved. Although both are per se identical, the excipient of mixing the drugs is different which explains why one can cause allergic reactions compare to the other. Alirocumab is an aqueous solution that contains the excipients 6mM Histidine, 10% Sucrose , 0.01% Polysorbate 20 and water for injection. We hypothesize that Histidine is what caused the allergic reaction, as it is known that Histidine is a biochemical precursor of Histamine, the main mediator of allergenic reaction. In the other hand, the PCSK9 inhibitor Evolocumab contains as excipients proline, glacial acetic acid, polysorbate 80, sodium hydroxide and water for injection. As it is evident, the excipient Histidine is absent on Evolocumab, which did not trigger any allergic reaction. In general there was no change in LDL Cholesterol from switching from one to another PCSK9-i. In our case although we are using very aggressive therapy unfortunately we have not yet reach our target.

**Learning objective**

Aliracumab and Evolocumab are very potent medications on treating dyslipidemia with very safe use, however allergic reactions can happen to either one and switching them is a safe way to avoid allergic reactions.

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