Statistical Issues in Microbicide Trials

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WHO Symposium
Regulatory considerations for the review of microbicide clinical trials and product registration
Satellite meeting in conjunction with Microbicides 2010 International Conference
Pittsburgh, PA, USA
Saturday, 22 May 2010 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
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Microbicides: Trial Design

Topics for Discussion:

- Evidence Level
- Adherence
- Adaptive Design Issues
- Is a Condom-only Arm Necessary?
1. Evidence Level

- Standards for drug approval include two adequate and well-controlled trials each with two-sided significance level $0.05 = \text{one-sided } 0.025$.
  - Somewhat different populations enrolled in each trial is preferred.

- One large trial should have a one-sided level of $0.000625 = 0.025 \times 0.025$ with consistency across sub-groups.
1. Evidence Level

• The absence of Phase II trials demonstrating proof of concept increases the risk that Phase III trials will be unsuccessful
  – If we have 10 trials with ineffective drugs, one could beat placebo at a level of 0.1
  – There is a 50% chance that one ineffective drug will win at a p-value of 0.05
  – Chance of replicating a trial with a p-value of 0.05 is not great unless the gel is truly effective
1. Evidence Level

• With the first approved gel, it may be difficult to conduct placebo controlled trials
  – All future trials will be non-inferiority trials against the approved gel

• If the first approved gel is in fact ineffective because of a lower statistical standard, then future development programs may be negatively impacted.
1. Evidence Level

• FDA’s mission is to protect the public health
  – Setting reasonable criteria for the conduct and interpretation of clinical trials that support safety and efficacy of products to prevent HIV acquisition
  – Setting strong enough standards to terminate drug development programs of ineffective products

Guidance for Industry: Providing Clinical Evidence of Effectiveness for Human Drug and Biological Products
2. Adherence

• For public health and regulatory purposes, we recognize non-adherence will occur once a drug is approved.

• As regulators, we are interested in the effect of prescribing a drug which may be different from effect of using the drug in a clinical trial.

• Therefore, adjustment for non-adherence is not permitted in the primary analysis.
2. Adherence

• No reward for adherence should be offered in the trial if the same reward will not be available once the drug is on market.

• Condom and gel adherence information should be diligently collected to help understand how the drug works or why the drug fails.
3. Adaptive Design

• The lack of Phase II clinical trial information makes it necessary to have early reviews of large phase III trials to ensure the drug is safe before further enrollment

• Some changes based on this early look are permissible

3. Adaptive Design

- Planned number of patients enrolled may be increased if the total infection rate is much lower than expected.

- This increase is permitted because the sample size is actually based on the number of sero-conversions.
3. Adaptive Design

• Multiple doses of a test gel can be reduced by discontinuing the less effective doses.

• The initial design must include appropriate multiple comparison adjustments for the original number of arms. No further adjustment is needed for stopping some arms early.

• Other less stringent multiple comparison adjustments are possible if it can be shown to control Type I error.
3. Adaptive Design

- Multiple arms with different drugs, possibly from different sponsors can be used.

- There is no multiple comparison adjustment here because the Type I error control is for each drug. Each drug vs. placebo is thought of as a separate trial.

- Permits smaller total enrollment because of shared placebo

- Could make the trial more acceptable by using fewer placebo subjects
3. Adaptive Design

- Enrollment criteria can be changed to recruit from higher risk subpopulations if such is identified by the early look
4. Is a condom-only arm necessary?

- HPTN035 found almost the same infection rates in the condom-only and placebo-gel arms, despite significantly different condom usage (81% vs. 70%)
  - HIV Infection more likely occurs during sexual acts when condoms are not used.
  - 19% of the time condoms were not used in the condom-only arm vs. 30% in the placebo arm, a half-fold increase
  - Similar sero-conversion rates in the condom-only vs. the placebo arm could be due to:
    - Small number of HIV infections making such even distribution possible despite underlying difference in overall infection rates
    - Placebo gel was protective, which compensated for the lack of condom use

- We prefer condom-only arm in new trials to confirm placebo non-inferiority to condom-only, if possible

Abstract #48LB CROI, Montreal, 2009
4. Is a condom-only arm necessary?

- HPTN035 still leaves some uncertainty about the true difference in sero-conversion rates between placebo and condom-only.

- The new gel should beat placebo by a wide enough margin to provide confidence that the sero-conversion rate of a new gel will be better than condom-only.

- Sample size calculations need to account for the new gel vs. condom-only comparison

- Cumulative non-clinical and clinical safety data of placebo gel also need to be considered
Acknowledgements

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