

Crucell

About Hepatitis C

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Crucell has obtained an exclusive license from Stanford University (Palo Alto, California) for the development of an antibody combination against the Hepatitis C virus. A large panel of fully human monoclonal antibodies against the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is being evaluated by Crucell in a proof of concept phase.

Hepatitis C virus is one of the major causes of chronic liver disease, and the most common cause of liver transplantation. Although liver transplantation is a life-saving operation, it does not cure the patient from HCV infection. In fact, shortly after transplantation, the graft is re-infected with HCV. Due to the poor condition of the patient, which is under immunosuppressive therapy, antiviral treatment (to prevent re-infection) is not tolerated.

Crucell is developing a monoclonal antibody combination with the aim to prevent re-infection of the transplanted liver. Monoclonal antibodies are (in contrast to antiviral agents) expected to be well-tolerated at this stage, because they constitute part of the body's own defense mechanisms against infections. The antibodies under investigation recognize distinct parts of the E2 protein, which is exposed on the surface of the virus.

About hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a disease of the liver, caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV). The virus can be transmitted by direct blood contact, for instance by sharing contaminated needles among drug users or needle stick injuries in healthcare settings. It is estimated that about 170 million people worldwide have been infected with HCV. Currently, there is no approved vaccine against HCV. Most people, who have been infected, develop chronic disease. Symptomatic chronic HCV patients can be treated with antiviral agents (usually a combination of pegylated interferon and ribavirin), but with limited success. In 10 to 25% of the cases, patients develop serious liver damage (like cirrhosis or liver cancer) over a period of one or several decades. The only treatment option for end-stage liver disease is transplantation. HCV is the leading cause for liver transplantation.



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