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Title **Stabilized Hyaluronic Acid in the Treatment of Osteoarthritis**

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Aim

To compile the most relevant documents and summarize their conclusions to provide information on the effectiveness and safety of stabilized hyaluronic acid in treating osteoarthritis.

Conclusions and results

Five documents were selected, but only one controlled, double-blind randomized trial was retrieved comparing efficacy and safety of non-animal stabilized hyaluronic acid (NASHA) against placebo in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee (either associated with other affected joints or not). Many limitations in methodology in the remaining selected publications made it impossible to draw conclusions on efficacy.

No significant differences were found in the clinical trial between the placebo and intervention arms for the following endpoints: number of patients responding to treatment, assessment of the overall status of the patient, quality of life scale, and WOMAC pain score.

Greater response to NASHA treatment was reported in the subgroup of patients with osteoarthritis confined to one or both knees. This, however, must be interpreted with caution due to the low number of patients in this subgroup, and in view of the fact that no analysis was conducted to adjust for variables that might potentially influence the response to treatment.

The incidence of adverse effects ranged between 5% and 13% in osteoarthritis of knee (8% in the placebo group) and 29% in hip involvement.

Evidence is still insufficient to prove the superiority, in terms of efficacy, of stabilized hyaluronic acid versus placebo or conventional preparations in treating osteoarthritis.

Methods

Reference databases such as MEDLINE, EMBASE, INAHTA, Cochrane Library, EuroScan, NICE, and the Technology Evaluation Center (TEC) were used. Moreover, a hand search was done in Google Scholar and Medscape, and a secondary review was conducted of the references in the articles found. Systematic and narrative reviews, full documents, and original articles were searched. The articles were read and a qualitative summary was prepared, which evaluated the methodologies used in the different studies.

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