New Treatments for Chronic Hepatitis B

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EASL Clinical Practice Guidelines on the management of HBV infection

**Choice of therapy:** Potent NA with high barrier to resistance regardless of the severity of liver disease
- TAF, TDF and ETV as monotherapies are preferred
- LAM, ADV and LdT are not recommended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indications for selecting TAF or ETV over TDF</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age &gt;60 years</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Bone disease</strong></td>
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<td>Chronic steroid use or use of other medications that worsen bone density, history of fragility fracture, osteoporosis</td>
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<td><strong>Renal aberration</strong> (eGFR &lt;60 min/mL/1.73 m²; albuminuria; low phosphate; haemodialysis)</td>
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<td>• ETV dose adjusted if eGFR &lt;50 mL/min</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No dose adjustment of TAF is required in adults or adolescents* with estimated CrCl ≥15 mL/min or in patients with CrCl &lt;15 mL/min who are receiving haemodialysis</td>
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TAF preferred to ETV in patients with previous NA exposure

*Aged at least 12 years and of at least 35 kg body weight

EASL. J Hepatol 2017; 67:370-98
Why are new agents needed for CHB?

• Most patients need long-term NA therapy; relapse rate high after stopping treatment

• Ultimate aim would be to ‘cure’ CHB
  – Functional cure
    • Off-therapy persistent HBV suppression
  – HBsAg loss and seroconversion
  – cccDNA eradication
  – Prevention of negative outcomes (HCC)


cccDNA: covalently closed circular DNA
HBV therapies: new targets, new drugs, new aims

Immunomodulation
- Toll-like receptors agonists: GS-9620
- Anti-PD-1 mAb: BMS-936559, CYT107
- SB9200
- Therapeutic vaccines: GS4774, ABX203

RNA interference, (siRNA): ARC-520,, ARC-521, ARB-1740

Inhibition of HBsAg release: REP 9AC, REP2139-CA

Polymerase inhibitors
- Nucleos(t)ide analogues: TAF, amdoxovir, MIV-210, besifovir
- Non-nucleoside: LB80380

Inhibition of nucleocapsid assembly: Bay 41-4109, NVR 3-778, AB-423, JNJ 56136379NVR

Targeting cccDNA:
- HAPs
- Chromatin-modifying enzymes

Entry inhibitors (HBV/HDV)
- Lipopeptides: Myrcludex B

HBV ENTRY INHIBITOR
Identification of NTCP as an HBV receptor

NTCP = sodium taurocholate cotransporting polypeptide


NTCP: sodium taurocholate cotransporting polypeptide
HBV infectivity domains

N-terminal myristoylation of L protein for plasma membrane association

Pre-S1 aa 2-48 specifically interacts with NTCP

Antigenic loop (AGL) of the S domain for HSPG binding and membrane fusion

Myrcludex B = myristoylated peptide encompassing aa 2-48 of the Pre-S1 region

Urban S, et al Gastroenterology 2014;147:48-64
Phase 1 study on health volunteers for Myrcludex B

• Non-linear PK up to dose of 20mg, receptor saturation at 10mg to 20mg doses

• Readily SC bioavailable

• Very well tolerated, no serious adverse events

• Adverse events or lab abnormalities transient and not related to the drug

• No anti-drug antibodies detected

Interim results of a multicenter, open-label phase 2b clinical trial to assess safety and efficacy of Myrcludex B in combination with Tenofovir in patients with chronic HBV/HDV co-infection

- 120 HBV/HDV co-infected patients randomized into 4 treatment arms in a ratio of 1:1:1:1 – 30 patients per arm
- Patients pretreated with tenofovir for ≥12 weeks
- Myrcludex B was self administered by patients once daily SC
- All patients received tenofovir (oral QD) during entire study period

![Graph showing HBsAg response to different doses of Myrcludex B and TDF.](image)

Drop in HDV RNA but no change in HBsAg levels in all arms

RNA INTERFERENCE
The RNA therapeutic aims to reverse immune suppression.

mRNA: messenger RNA

mRNA

HBV virion

Hepatocyte

Infection

HBV DNA

Viral protein production

Viral antigens HBsAg HBeAg

Reduced viral protein production

Immune suppression unchanged

Reduction/elimination of reinfection, contagion

Reduced viral replication

HBsAg loss and functional cure

Reduced viral antigen
A phase 2a study evaluating the multi-dose activity of ARB-1467 in HBeAg-positive and negative virally suppressed patients with HBV

**ARB-1467**: 3 synthetic, double-stranded, siRNAs directed against HBV mRNAs

Adult CHB patients on ETV or TDF

![Graph showing efficacy of ARB-1467 vs Placebo over time]

- HBeAg-negative ARB-1467 0.2 mg/kg
- HBeAg-negative ARB-1467 0.4 mg/kg
- HBeAg-positive ARB-1467 0.4 mg/kg
- Placebo

*Stepwise, additive reductions with multiple doses (>1 log10 IU/mL in 5/11 patients with 0.4 mg/kg)*

*No significant differences in serum HBsAg between HBeAg-negative and HBeAg-positive*

Streinu-Cercel A, et al. EASL 2017, Amsterdam. #SAT-155
Multi-dose activity of ARB-1467 in HBeAg-negative virally suppressed subjects with HBV

**Responder criteria:**
HBsAg ≤1000 IU/mL with ≥1 log_{10} decline during the first 10 wks of treatment

Mean change from BL HBsAg

7/11 had HBsAg reductions >1 log_{10} reduction

Agarwal K, et al. AASLD 2017, Washington DC. #40
CAPSID INHIBITOR
HBV Core Protein

- HBV Core plays multiple essential roles – high efficacy potential for inhibitors
- Core proteins highly conserved – potential broad-spectrum activity across genotypes
- Core functions can be allosterically modulated by binding of small-molecule inhibitors

1. Capsid Assembly
2. cccDNA replenishment
3. Nuclear Function

HBV nucleocapsid

- Viral replication
- Suppression of Innate Immune responses (ISGs)
- cccDNA maintenance & transcription
Maximum HBV DNA reduction with peginterferon and NVR 3-778 combination

- Optimal trough level and maximum effect on HBV DNA reduction at 600 mg bd dose (1.72 log IU/ml)

- Additive effect of NVR 3-778 with PegIFN on HBV DNA (1.97 log IU/ml) and RNA (1.51 log copies/mL)

- 1 SAE of grade 3 papulovesicular hand-foot rash

Yuen M-F, et al. EASL 2016, Barcelona. LBO6
JNJ-56136379: Capsid assembly modulator (CAM)

- Potent in vitro inhibitor of HBV replication
  - Interferes with capsid assembly, resulting in formation of non-functional capsids w/out RNA, DNA
  - Prevents cccDNA formation during de novo infection, probably by interfering w/capsid disassembly
- 1st report of multiple doses in humans with CHB x 28 days
- 24 non-cirrhotic, treatment naive patients

IMMUNE MODULATORS
TLR-7 agonists

• TLR-7 activation leads to secretion of type I IFN, T-cell co-stimulation and B-cell differentiation

• GS-9620 is an oral TLR-7 agonist with nanomolar potency

• Preclinical studies show GS-9620 reduces HBsAg and HBV DNA in woodchucks and chimpanzees

• Phase 1a single ascending dose study complete: favourable safety profile shown in healthy volunteers (N=75)

GS-9620 is an investigational agent and not licensed for use in CHB; IRF: interferon regulatory transcription factor; NFκB: nuclear factor kappa B; ISG: interferon stimulating genes

Gane E, et al. AASLD 2013; Abstract 9896
TLR-7 agonist (GS-9620): significant dose dependent ISG15 mRNA induction but no change in HBsAg decline

Phase 2, double-blind, randomized, PBO-controlled study in patients with chronic HBV infection who were not being treated (GS-US-283-1062)

- Vesatolimod (GS-9620) was safe and well tolerated in patients with chronic HBV infection
- Dose-dependent pharmacodynamic induction of cytokines and ISGs was demonstrated, although this did not result in significant HBsAg declines
Therapeutic vaccination with GS-4774

- GS-4774 is a yeast-based vaccine expressing recombinant X, large S and core HBV antigens

GS-4774 structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Large S (env)</th>
<th>Core</th>
<th>His\textsubscript{6}</th>
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GS-4774 recombinant antigen

- X = 60 amino acids
- Large S = 399 amino acids
- Core = 182 amino acids
- M = MADEAP metabolic stability tag
- His\textsubscript{6} = 6 histidine-tag

- Detectable HBV-specific immune responses in healthy individuals for HBsAg, HBcAg and HBx

Gaggar A, et al. AASLD 2013; Abstract 9952; Clinicaltrials.gov NCT01779505

GS-4774 is an investigational agent and not licensed for use in CHB; env: envelope
No significant decline in HBsAg with therapeutic vaccine GS-4774 among patients on long-term antiviral drugs

- GS-4774 is a yeast-based vaccine expressing recombinant X, large S and core HBV antigens
- Randomized controlled trial in CHB patients on oral antiviral (OAV) for >1 year; on GS-4774 every 4 weekly until week 20 and OAV till week 48


No HBsAg loss in all patients
A phase 1 study evaluating anti-PD-1 treatment with or without GS-4774 in HBeAg-negative chronic hepatitis B patients

Blockade of programmed cell death protein (PD-1) or its ligand (PD-L1) to rescue HBV-specific T-cell responses

Gane E, et al. EASL 2017, Amsterdam. #PS-044
Retinoic acid-inducible protein I (RIG-I) agonist - ACHIEVE trial

SB 9200 = RIG-I activator

- Sensing
- Countering

RIG-I

HBV pgRNA

Reverse transcription
Viral replication

Type III IFNs

Dual antiviral effect against HBV

- 20 non-cirrhotic HBV subjects per cohort
- Randomized 4:1 between SB 9200 and PBO

Cohort 1: HBeAg(−) (n=7); HBeAg(+) (n=9); PBO (n=4)

Mean HBV DNA (Log₁₀) SB 9200 vs PBO alone + TDF switch

Combination therapy approach will be required to achieve cure of HBV

Ag: antigen; TLR: toll-like receptor; Tx: therapeutic

Adapted from Zoulim F. New targets for HBV therapy.