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On Drugs and Therapeutics

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IN BRIEF

Miltefosine for Amebic Meningoencephalitis Available from CDC

The CDC recently announced that it will now supply the investigational drug miltefosine (*Impavido* – Paladin, Canada) for treatment of infections caused by free-living amoebae.¹ The drug was previously available in the US only from the manufacturer through an FDA Investigational New Drug (IND) application.

Meningoencephalitis caused by the free-living amoebae *Naegleria fowleri*, *Acanthamoeba* spp., or *Balamuthia mandrillaris*, usually acquired through the nose while swimming in warm fresh water, has a mortality rate of >90% despite treatment with multiple antimicrobial drugs.² Miltefosine is active against free-living amoebae *in vitro*, and addition of the drug has improved survival in a small number of patients with *Acanthamoeba* spp. or *B. mandrillaris* infection. Infection with *N. fowleri* is especially severe; of 128 people known to be infected in the US since 1962, only one has survived. Miltefosine has not yet been shown to successfully treat *N. fowleri* infection.

Miltefosine is also used for treatment of visceral, cutaneous and mucosal leishmaniasis,² and may soon be approved by the FDA for this indication.

1. CDC. Investigational drug available directly from the CDC for the treatment of infections with free-living amoebae. MMWR 2013; 62:666. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6233a4.htm>. Accessed October 18, 2013.
2. Drugs for parasitic infections. Treat Guidel Med Lett 2013; 11:e1.

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