Patient Decision Aid
Zonisamide add-on therapy for drug-resistant focal epilepsy

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This summary is to help you talk with your doctor about using zonisamide (Zonegran) in addition to your current epilepsy medicine. It explains the evidence about the main benefits and risks of taking zonisamide alongside other epilepsy medicines. If your doctor recommends taking zonisamide, it is your decision whether to take it or not.

Who and what is zonisamide for?

Zonisamide is for people who have epilepsy, who are still having seizures, despite taking one or more epilepsy medicines. Zonisamide can be used as an add-on therapy, meaning that you take it alongside your other epilepsy medicines. The aim is to reduce or stop your seizures. Doctors can prescribe zonisamide to treat focal-onset seizures (which start in one side of the brain) with or without secondary generalisation (when a seizure spreads to affect both sides of the brain) that are not controlled by other epilepsy medicines.

Where did we get this information?

We looked at results from eight clinical trials. In total, the trials included 1,636 people. All of these people had drug-resistant focal epilepsy and were between 6 and 77 years old. This Patient Decision aid is, therefore, for children and adults with drug-resistant focal epilepsy.

In these trials, people took either zonisamide or a fake, inactive medicine (placebo). Both groups continued to take their usual epilepsy medicine as well.

The information in this resource is current to September 2019.
What are the main benefits of taking zonisamide?

It is not possible to know in advance what will happen for any individual person. But from the trial results, we found:

**Reduction in seizures**

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took **zonisamide** with their usual epilepsy medicine, 46 had a 50% or greater reduction in seizures, and 54 did not.

In comparison, for every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a **placebo** with their usual epilepsy medicine, 25 had a 50% or greater reduction in seizures and 75 did not.

These numbers show that people taking **zonisamide** were almost twice as likely to have a 50% reduction in seizures as those taking a **placebo**.

**How confident are we that these findings are correct?**

We grade the evidence we look at. We use these grades to decide how confident we are that our findings are accurate.

We graded the evidence for 50% or greater reduction in seizures to be of moderate certainty. This means we are fairly certain that these findings are accurate.
What are the main risks of taking zonisamide?

Like any medicine, zonisamide carries a risk of side-effects (see page 4 for possible side-effects). This is what we found from the evidence.

**Withdrawing from the trials**

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine, 16 withdrew from the trials, and 84 did not.

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a placebo with their usual epilepsy medicine, 11 withdrew from the trials, and 89 did not.

These numbers show that people taking zonisamide were around 50% more likely to withdraw from trials than those taking a placebo.

We did not study the reasons why people withdrew from trials. Possible reasons might include that they experienced side-effects, because the medicine did not improve their seizures, due to personal reasons, such as moving home, or other reasons.

**How confident are we that these findings are correct?**

We graded the evidence for withdrawal from treatment to be of moderate certainty. This means we are fairly confident that these findings are accurate.
What are the main side-effects of zonisamide?

It is not possible to know in advance what will happen to any individual person when they take medicine. We investigated side-effects that we know commonly affect people taking epilepsy medicine.

**Ataxia (problems with balance, co-ordination and speech)**

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine, 7 experienced ataxia and 93 did not.

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a placebo with their usual epilepsy medicine, 2 experienced ataxia and 98 did not.

**Dizziness**

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine, 11 experienced dizziness, and 89 did not.

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a placebo with their usual epilepsy medicine, 8 experienced dizziness, and 92 did not.
Drowsiness (feeling sleepy)
For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine, 11 experienced drowsiness, and 89 did not.

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a placebo with their usual epilepsy medicine, 7 experienced drowsiness, and 93 did not.

Fatigue (feeling very tired in body and mind)
For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine, 8 experienced fatigue, and 92 did not.

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a placebo with their usual epilepsy medicine, 5 experienced fatigue, and 95 did not.

Irritability (feeling irritated)
For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine, 10 experienced irritability, and 90 did not.

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a placebo with their usual epilepsy medicine, 4 experienced irritability, and 96 did not.
Nausea (feeling sick)

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine, 7 experienced nausea, and 93 did not.

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a placebo with their usual epilepsy medicine, 7 experienced nausea, and 93 did not.

Anorexia (an eating disorder where you feel a need to keep your weight as low as possible)

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine, 14 experienced anorexia, and 86 did not.

For every 100 people with drug-resistant focal epilepsy who took a placebo with their usual epilepsy medicine, 5 experienced anorexia, and 95 did not.

These numbers show that people taking zonisamide were more likely to experience: ataxia, drowsiness, irritability, and anorexia than people taking a placebo.

The most common side-effects experienced by people taking zonisamide with their usual epilepsy medicine were anorexia, dizziness, and drowsiness.
Is there any more information about side effects available?

There is more information about the possible side-effects associated with taking zonisamide on this page.

We have taken this information from the Summary of Product Characteristics* for zonisamide. This was produced by Eisai GmbH, the manufacturer of Zonegran, and was approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

Very common side-effects

For every 100 people taking zonisamide, more than 10 people will experience these side-effects:

- confusion
- decreased blood levels of bicarbonate (a substance that prevents your blood from becoming acidic)
- depression
- dizziness
- double vision
- irritability (feeling irritated)
- loss of appetite
- poor memory
- poor muscle coordination
- sleepiness

Common side-effects

For every 100 people taking zonisamide, between 1 and 10 people will experience these side-effects:

- abnormal skin sensation (for example, pins and needles)
- diarrhoea (loose stools) and constipation (difficulty passing stools)
- feeling anxious or emotional
- feeling like your thinking is slowed
- fever and flu-like symptoms

- hair loss
- indigestion
- insomnia (difficulty sleeping)
- involuntary movement of the eyes
- kidney stones
- nausea (feeling sick)
- problems concentrating
- skin rashes, itching, and allergic reactions
- small bruises
- speech abnormalities
- stomach pains
- strange or unusual thoughts
- swelling of the feet and legs
- tiredness
- tremor
- weight loss

There are also other less common side-effects. Your doctor can explain these further.
Women of child-bearing age and women planning pregnancy

Women of child-bearing potential and those planning pregnancy should discuss the effects of both epilepsy, and its treatment, on pregnancy. For women of child-bearing age who wish to take zonisamide, your doctor may wish to discuss family planning and contraception with you.

More information regarding this is available at:
www.epilepsy.org.uk/info/women

Where can I get further information?

Information about epilepsy, including seizure types and treatment, is available from Epilepsy Action at:
www.epilepsy.org.uk/info

The information in this leaflet is also available as a plain language summary from the following webpage (this link also provides information about the review authors, the review funders and any relevant declarations of interest):