Recombinant snakebite antivenoms: A cost-competitive solution to a neglected tropical disease?

Snakebite envenoming is a major public health burden in tropical parts of the developing world. In sub-Saharan Africa, neglect has led to a scarcity of antivenoms threatening the lives and limbs of snakebite victims. Technological advances within antivenom are warranted, but should be evaluated not only on their possible therapeutic impact, but also on their cost-competitiveness. Recombinant antivenoms based on oligoclonal mixtures of human IgG antibodies produced by CHO cell cultivation may be the key to obtaining better snakebite envenoming therapies. Based on industry data, the cost of treatment for a snakebite envenoming with a recombinant antivenom is estimated to be in the range USD 60-250 for the Final Drug Product. One of the effective antivenoms (SAIMR Snake Polyvalent Antivenom from the South African Vaccine Producers) currently on the market has been reported to have a wholesale price of USD 640 per treatment for an average snakebite. Recombinant antivenoms may therefore in the future be a cost-competitive alternative to existing serum-based antivenoms.

General information
Publication status: Published
Organisations: Department of Biotechnology and Biomedicine, Network Engineering of Eukaryotic Cell factories, Department of Bio and Health Informatics, Genomic Epidemiology, Technical University of Denmark
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Number of pages: 14
Publication date: 2017
Peer-reviewed: Yes

Publication information
Journal: PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases (Online)
Volume: 11
Issue number: 2
Article number: e0005361
ISSN (Print): 1935-2735
Ratings:
BFI (2017): BFI-level 1
Scopus rating (2017): CiteScore 4.36
Web of Science (2017): Impact factor 4.367
Web of Science (2017): Indexed yes
Original language: English
Electronic versions:
journal.pntd.0005361.pdf
DOIs:
10.1371/journal.pntd.0005361
Source: FindIt
Source-ID: 2352231415
Research output: Contribution to journal › Journal article – Annual report year: 2017 › Research › peer-review