

High dose AMBISOME on a fluconazole backbone for cryptococcal meningitis induction therapy in sub-Saharan Africa

Submission date 23/06/2017	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	☒ Prospectively registered ☒ Protocol
Registration date 13/07/2017	Overall study status Completed	☐ Statistical analysis plan ☒ Results
Last Edited 06/06/2025	Condition category Infections and Infestations	☐ Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Cryptococcal meningitis is a fungal infection of the tissues covering the brain and spinal cord. It is a leading cause of death in HIV-infected people in Africa. The current recommended treatment is a drug called amphotericin B deoxycholate (D-AmB). Treatment with amphotericin B deoxycholate requires 7 days of intravenous infusions (into a vein) given in hospital, making it difficult and costly to use. It also causes many side effects, including kidney impairment and anaemia (having too little haemoglobin and too few red blood cells), making close laboratory monitoring essential. The combination of the costs associated with prolonged hospital stays, the difficulties of use and the need for laboratory monitoring make amphotericin B deoxycholate treatment difficult in much of Africa. A modified form of amphotericin B is available called liposomal amphotericin B (Ambisome or L-AmB). This is considerably less toxic than standard amphotericin B deoxycholate, and is known to be effective in the treatment of cryptococcal meningitis. Its use has been limited by the high cost, but recent data suggest that much shorter courses of L-AmB may be effective in the treatment of cryptococcal meningitis. Due to its lower toxicity, higher doses of L-AmB can be given safely, and it also persists for a long time in the tissues, raising the possibility of delivering highly effective treatment with just a single dose. A large reduction in the number of doses and duration of hospitalisation, together with reduced pricing of L-AmB, may result in cryptococcal meningitis treatment costs that are not more than those with 7 days of conventional amphotericin B deoxycholate, and provide a convenient, safe and effective alternative to conventional amphotericin B treatment. The aim of this study is to find out whether a single high dose of L-AmB is as effective as the standard treatment in terms of preventing deaths from cryptococcal meningitis.

Who can participate?

Patients aged over 18 with cryptococcal meningitis and HIV positive

What does the study involve?

Participants remain in hospital and are randomly allocated to be treated with either a single high dose of L-AmB or the standard amphotericin-B treatment over 7 days. Participants are asked to return to hospital for four medical check-up at weeks 4, 6, 8 and 10. If they are in hospital for

less than 2 weeks they are also seen in clinic at 2 weeks. Each visit lasts about 60 minutes. The final follow-up is by telephone and takes place at week 16. This follow-up lasts about 5 minutes. Mortality (death rates) are compared between the two groups.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

The evidence from previous studies suggests that Ambisome is likely to be better tolerated and cause fewer side effects than amphotericin B. Participants may also benefit from receiving a shorter course of treatment with fewer intravenous infusions if they are allocated to the Ambisome group. The results of this study might help improve the treatment of people with cryptococcal meningitis in the future. It is possible that short course of high dose Ambisome may not be enough for effective treatment, and that full 14-day courses may be required for effective clearance of infection. The trialists think that this is unlikely given the experience they have with using short course, high dose Ambisome in treating this same infection. To ensure all participants get effective treatment the clearance of infection is monitored very closely. If there is any evidence that the cryptococcal infection is not being cleared adequately participants are switched to standard courses of treatment. In the event of this happening, their hospital admission may be prolonged. It is also possible that high doses of Ambisome may be more toxic than standard doses. Ambisome can cause impairment to kidney function and anaemia. However, extensive experience, often in very sick patients on chemotherapy, suggests that high doses of Ambisome are well tolerated. To minimize any risk of toxicity participants are closely monitored for side effects in hospital and the drugs are stopped if required. Results from an earlier study suggest that high dose Ambisome is no more toxic than standard treatment, and may be less toxic. By taking part in the study participants probably receive more lumbar punctures than you would during routine treatment. Lumbar punctures are very safe procedures when performed correctly by experienced doctors. Serious complications are rare. Lumbar punctures can be painful, and soreness of the back and headaches may occur. Very rarely more serious complications such as bleeding, infection and leakages can occur. Great care is taken to ensure the risks are as low as possible, and that discomfort is minimised by using local anaesthetic. In many patients with cryptococcal meningitis, lumbar punctures relieve the associated headache. Great care is taken to ensure the risks are as low as possible. The trialists have experience of performing this schedule of lumbar punctures on over 500 patients, and have not had any serious complications. In fact, performing regular lumbar punctures appears to be associated with improved outcomes in patients with cryptococcal meningitis.

Where is the study run from?

1. Princess Marina Hospital (Botswana)
2. Mitchells Plain District Hospital (South Africa)
3. Parirenyatwa Central Hospital (Zimbabwe)
4. Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (Malawi)
5. Kamuzu Central Hospital (Malawi)
6. Mulago Hospital, Infectious Disease Institute (Uganda)
7. Mbarara Hospital (Uganda)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

January 2017 to December 2020

Who is funding the study?

1. European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP)
2. Wellcome Trust (UK)
3. Medical Research Council (UK)
4. Department for International Development Joint Global Health Trials (JGHT)

Who is the main contact?

Prof. Joe Jarvis

Contact information

Type(s)

Public

Contact name

Prof Joe Jarvis

Contact details

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Ambition Study Team

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Gaborone

Botswana

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number

Ambition P3

Study information

Scientific Title

High dose AMBISOME on a fluconazole backbone for cryptococcal meningitis induction therapy in sub-Saharan Africa: a Phase 3 randomised controlled non-Inferiority trial

Acronym

Ambition-cm

Study objectives

Current study hypothesis as of 01/08/2018:

Short-course high-dose L-AmB given with high dose fluconazole and flucytosine will be non-inferior to 7 days daily-dosed Amphotericin B based induction therapy with flucytosine for the treatment of HIV-associated cryptococcal meningitis in averting all-cause mortality.

Previous study hypothesis:

Short-course high-dose L-AmB given with high dose fluconazole and flucytosine will be non-inferior to 2 weeks daily-dosed Amphotericin B based induction therapy with flucytosine for the treatment of HIV-associated cryptococcal meningitis in averting all-cause mortality.

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

LSHTM Interventional Committee Review Board, 09/06/2017, ref: 14322

Primary study design

Interventional

Study design

Randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)

Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Cryptococcal meningitis in HIV patients

Interventions

Current interventions as of 01/08/2018:

850 patients will be enrolled and randomised 1:1 into two arms:

1. L-AmB 10 mg/kg day 1 (single dose)
2. Amphotericin-B 1mg/kg/d for 7 days (standard dose "control arm")

The intake will take place over a 3-year period, and follow-up will occur for 16 weeks after the start of treatment.

Previous interventions:

850 patients will be enrolled and randomised 1:1 into two arms:

1. L-AmB 10 mg/kg day 1 (single dose)
2. Amphotericin-B 1mg/kg/d for 14 days (standard dose "control arm")

The intake will take place over a 3-year period, and follow-up will occur for 16 weeks after the start of treatment.

Randomisation

Patients will be randomised individually and randomisation codes will be generated using SAS PROC PLAN via permuted-block randomisation method stratified by site. Block sizes will vary at 4 and 6. Randomisation lists will be created for each site by an independent statistician and each list will be housed on the electronic database system (EDC) for that particular site, and will be inaccessible to trial staff except to randomise the next eligible participant. Randomised allocation for each trial participant will be provided to trial staff by extracting the next available randomisation allocation, obtained from the randomisation list for that site housed on the database. Internally the EDC selects against an electronic randomization list prepared in advance by the Statistician. The EDC guarantees to make the selection in the natural order of the list filtering by study site only. Once a selection is made, the randomization record is tagged with the patient study allocated identifier, date and time of randomization and other EDC system audit values (username, machine name, etc). A tagged record cannot be selected more than once. It is impractical to blind the study because of the very high doses of short course L-AmB (currently up to 20 drug vials per dose depending on patient weight) used in the intervention arm, compared to the standard amphotericin B deoxycholate (often only a single vial per patient), given daily, in the control arm. Bias will be minimised by the use of an objective clinical endpoint "all-cause 10-week mortality" as the primary outcome. Laboratory technicians performing EFA will be blinded to study arm. The trial statistician will be blinded regarding the treatment code when developing the statistical analysis plan and writing the statistical analysis programmes, which will be validated and completed using dummy randomisation codes.

Intervention Type

Drug

Phase

Phase III

Drug/device/biological/vaccine name(s)

L-AmB, amphotericin-B

Primary outcome(s)

All-cause mortality within the first 10 weeks after randomisation (non-inferiority)

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Early fungicidal activity, derived from serial lumbar punctures on days 1, 7 and 14
2. Clinical and laboratory-defined grade III/IV adverse events; median % change from baseline in laboratory defined parameters as and when AEs occur
3. Pharmacokinetic parameters and pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic associations of single high-dose L-AmB at 3, 6, 8 and 24 hours post L-AmB dose
4. Health service costs within the first 10 weeks
5. All-cause mortality within the first 2 and 4 weeks
6. All-cause mortality within the first 10 weeks (superiority)
7. Rates of cryptococcal relapse/immune reconstitution inflammatory syndrome within the first 10 weeks
8. Disability, measured using a simple two-question assessment and modified Rankin Score at 10 weeks

Completion date

30/06/2021

Eligibility**Key inclusion criteria**

1. Consecutive patients aged >18 years with a first episode of cryptococcal meningitis (CSF India ink or CrAg test)
2. Known to be HIV positive or willing to undertake an HIV test
3. Willing to participate in the study or, if unable to consent, has a next of kin who agrees to the patient participating in the study

Participant type(s)

Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit

18 Years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

844

Key exclusion criteria

1. Pregnancy (confirmed by urinary or serum pregnancy test) or lactation
2. Previous serious reaction to study drugs
3. Already taking antifungal treatment at cryptococcal meningitis treatment doses (amphotericin B ≥ 0.7 mg/kg or fluconazole ≥ 800 mg/day) for >48 hours
4. Concomitant medication that is contraindicated with study drugs
5. HIV negative

Date of first enrolment

01/09/2017

Date of final enrolment

28/02/2021

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

Botswana

Malawi

South Africa

Uganda

Zimbabwe

Study participating centre**Princess Marina Hospital**

Gaborone

Botswana

PO Box 258

Study participating centre**Mitchells Plain District Hospital**

Cape Town

South Africa

7786

Study participating centre**Khayelitsha Hospital**

Cape Town

South Africa
7784

Study participating centre
Parirenyatwa Central Hospital
Harare
Zimbabwe
-

Study participating centre
Harare Central Hospital
Harare
Zimbabwe
-

Study participating centre
Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital
Blantyre
Malawi
PO Box 95

Study participating centre
Kamuzu Central Hospital
Lilongwe
Malawi
-

Study participating centre
Mulago Hospital, Infectious Disease Institute
Kampala
Uganda
PO Box 22418

Study participating centre
Mbarara Hospital
Mbarara
Uganda
PO Box 7272

Sponsor information

Organisation

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

ROR

<https://ror.org/00a0jsq62>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Other

Funder Name

European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership

Alternative Name(s)

The European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership, The European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials, Le partenariat Europe-Pays en développement pour les essais cliniques, A Parceria entre a Europa e os Países em Desenvolvimento para a Realização de Ensaio Clínicos, EDCTP

Funding Body Type

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

International organizations

Location

Netherlands

Funder Name

Wellcome Trust

Alternative Name(s)

Funding Body Type

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

International organizations

Location

United Kingdom

Funder Name

Medical Research Council

Alternative Name(s)

Medical Research Council (United Kingdom), UK Medical Research Council, Medical Research Committee and Advisory Council, MRC

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

National government

Location

United Kingdom

Funder Name

Department for International Development Joint Global Health Trials (JGHT)

Alternative Name(s)

Department for International Development, UK, DFID

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

National government

Location

United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The current data sharing plans for the current study are unknown and will be made available at a later date.

IPD sharing plan summary

Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		24/03/2022	24/03/2022	Yes	No
Results article	Cost-effectiveness	01/12/2022	21/11/2022	Yes	No
Protocol article		23/11/2018		Yes	No
Protocol article	Economic evaluation protocol	01/04/2019	04/04/2019	Yes	No
Other publications	Analysis of HIV drug resistance mutations	02/11/2022	03/11/2022	Yes	No
Other publications	Sub-study	27/08/2024	02/09/2024	Yes	No
Other publications	Sub-study	01/06/2025	06/06/2025	Yes	No