Patients Receiving Eculizumab (Soliris®) at High Risk for Invasive Meningococcal Disease Despite Vaccination

Summary
Eculizumab (Soliris®) recipients have a 1,000 to 2,000-fold greater risk of invasive meningococcal disease compared to the general U.S. population. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved prescribing information for eculizumab includes a black box warning for increased risk of meningococcal disease, and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends meningococcal vaccination for all patients receiving eculizumab. Recent data show that some patients receiving eculizumab who were vaccinated with the recommended meningococcal vaccines still developed meningococcal disease, most often from nongroupable Neisseria meningitidis, which rarely causes invasive disease in healthy individuals.

Background
Eculizumab is most commonly prescribed for treatment of 2 rare blood disorders: atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS) and paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria (PNH). Through a request for data on meningococcal disease cases reported to state health departments, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified 16 cases of meningococcal disease in eculizumab recipients in the United States from 2008 through 2016; 11 (69%) of these were caused by nongroupable N. meningitidis. Meningococcal conjugate (MenACWY) vaccine targets serogroups A, C, W, and Y, and provides no protection against nongroupable N. meningitidis. Serogroup B meningococcal (MenB) vaccines are licensed specifically for protection against serogroup B meningococcal disease. Researchers have not assessed the extent of any potential cross protection for nongroupable N. meningitidis strains.

Recommendations for Healthcare Providers
Healthcare Providers:
- Could consider antimicrobial prophylaxis for the duration of eculizumab therapy to potentially reduce the risk of meningococcal disease.
- Should continue meningococcal vaccination of all patients who receive eculizumab.
- Should administer meningococcal vaccines at least 2 weeks prior to administering the first dose of eculizumab, unless the risks of delaying eculizumab therapy outweigh the risks of developing a meningococcal infection, according to the product label.
- Should maintain a high index of suspicion for meningococcal disease in patients taking eculizumab who present with any symptoms consistent with either meningitis or meningococcemia, even if the patient’s symptoms initially appear mild, and irrespective of the patient’s meningococcal vaccine or antimicrobial prophylaxis status.

For More Information
Managing the Risk of Meningococcal Disease among Patients Who Receive Eculizumab Therapy
https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/clinical/eculizumab.html

Signs and Symptoms of Meningococcal Disease
https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/about/symptoms.html
References
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6627e1.htm?s_cid=mm6627e1_w

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people’s health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national, and international organizations.

Categories of Health Alert Network messages:
Health Alert Requires immediate action or attention; highest level of importance
Health Advisory May not require immediate action; provides important information for a specific incident or situation
Health Update Unlikely to require immediate action; provides updated information regarding an incident or situation
HAN Info Service Does not require immediate action; provides general public health information

##This message was distributed to state and local health offices, state and local epidemiologists, state and local laboratory directors, public information officers, HAN coordinators, and clinician organizations##