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The Battle of "Nano" Paclitaxel

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Abstract

Paclitaxel (PTX) is one of the three most widely used chemotherapeutic agents, together with doxorubicin and cisplatin, and is first or second line treatment for several types of cancers. In 2000, Taxol, the conventional formulation of PTX, became the best selling cancer drug of all time with annual sales of 1.6 billion. In 2005, the introduction of the albuminbased formulation of PTX, known as Abraxane, ended Taxol's monopoly of the PTX market. Abraxane's ability to push the Taxol innovator and generic formulations aside attracted fierce competition amongst competitors worldwide to develop their own unique, new and improved formulation of PTX. At this time there are at least 18 companies focused on preclinical and/or clinical development of nano-formulations of PTX. These pharmaceutical companies are investing substantial capital to capture a share of the lucrative global PTX market. It is hoped that any formulation that dominates the market will result in tangible benefits to patients in terms of both survival and quality of life. Given all of this activity, here we address the question: Who is going to win the battle of "nano" paclitaxel?

Keywords

Nanotechnology; Nanomedicine; Paclitaxel; Taxol[®]; Abraxane[®]; Oncology

Highlights

- In 2000, Taxol, the conventional formulation of paclitaxel became the best selling cancer drug of all time with annual sales of 1.6 billion
- The nanomedicine Abraxane ended Taxol's monopoly of the paclitaxel market and is poised to reach annual sales of 1 billion this year
- Abraxane's ability to displace Taxol encouraged small and large biotech and pharma companies to develop their own nano-formulations of this drug with several now reaching clinical development
- A comprehensive analysis of the performance of these new formulations demonstrates that they are largely clinically equivalent to Abraxane leaving significant room for design of a superior formulation

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