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Our Mission

The University of Pittsburgh Myositis Center mission is to provide a state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment center for all aspects of immune-mediated muscle disorders and related diseases and to lead the way in clinical and basic science research in the inflammatory myopathies. Our goal is to develop better therapies for the treatment of myositis and its complications and to aid in the cure of myositis. We strive to educate patients and providers regarding the diagnosis and management of these diseases.

Meet the Team

Chester V. Oddis MD, Professor of Medicine in the Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunology, has been involved in myositis research for over 30 years with longstanding interest in the epidemiology, clinical features, autoantibody correlations and treatment of myositis. His research has contributed to a better understanding of inflammatory myopathy and the elucidation of the pathogenesis of this rare autoimmune disease. He has investigated the pulmonary complications of myositis and the treatment of this common problem. He has traveled extensively as a visiting professor and guest lecturer on the diagnosis and management of patients with myositis including the use of novel immunosuppressive agents for refractory myositis. As Director of the Myositis Center at the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Oddis supervises and manages one of the world’s largest clinically and serologically-defined, longitudinal myositis databases which includes over 1000 patients with adult polymyositis, adult dermatomyositis, and overlap myositis disorders. He was the Principal Investigator on the RIM (Rituximab in Myositis) Trial, the first multicenter clinical trial in myositis funded by the National Institutes of Health and the largest clinical trial ever completed in myositis enrolling 200 subjects from 20 adult and 11 pediatric national and international centers. Dr. Oddis has collaborated with many national and international myositis investigators and has participated with task forces developing clinical trial guidelines for both myositis as well as autoimmune interstitial lung disease.

Rohit Aggarwal MD, MS is an Associate Professor of Medicine, Medical Director of the Arthritis and Autoimmunity Center and Co-Director of the Myositis Center at the University of Pittsburgh. He is an international expert in various forms of myositis and associated interstitial lung disease. His interests include clinical and translational research in myositis and associated interstitial lung disease including outcome measures and clinical trials. He has published more than 100 articles and abstracts on myositis and associated conditions. He is currently leading several clinical trials and studies in myositis. He is a clinician scientist who also enjoys teaching at all levels of medical education and integrates his roles as clinician, scientist, and educator. Dr. Aggarwal is vice-chair of the medical board of The Myositis Association (TMA), a myositis patient organization, as well as chair of the scientific committee of the International Myositis Assessment and Clinical Studies (IMACS) Group, a consortium of myositis experts around the world. He is the current co-chair of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) abstract review committee myopathy section. Along with Dr. Oddis, Dr. Aggarwal is instrumental in the development of one of the largest myositis repositories of clinical data and samples in the country with more than 1500 subjects. Dr. Aggarwal has received various accolades including the Distinguished Fellow Award from the ACR.

Siamak Moghadam-Kia MD, MPH is currently a junior faculty at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and conducting research under the mentorship of Drs. Chester Oddis and Rohit Aggarwal. He has specifically studied the clinical features of dermatomyositis patients possessing a novel autoantibody and its association with interstitial lung disease and survival. His research interests include clinical features and treatment of idiopathic inflammatory myopathies, autoantibodies and biomarkers in idiopathic inflammatory myopathies, and cutaneous manifestations of systemic rheumatic disease. He is also sub or co-investigator in several investigator-initiated and industry-sponsored clinical trials including an investigator-initiated multicenter clinical trial in myositis investigating the role of Tocilizumab in the treatment of refractory polymyositis and dermatomyositis. Dr. Moghadam-Kia has received several awards for excellence in patient care and research including the American College of Rheumatology Distinguished Fellow Award in 2014. He has presented his previous research work in oral and poster presentations at national and international meetings and produced several peer-reviewed publications in high impact journals.
Actively Recruiting Studies

Abatacept for the Treatment of Myositis-associated Interstitial Lung Disease (ATTackMy-ILD)

This investigator-initiated proof of concept multi-centered study will evaluate the efficacy, safety and tolerability of abatacept (ABT) in anti-synthetase-associated interstitial lung disease (Syn-ILD) in a randomized, placebo-controlled 6-month (24-week) study. The primary objective is to evaluate the efficacy, safety and tolerability of ABT (125 mg SQ weekly) and standard of care (SOC) vs. SOC alone in patients with Syn-ILD. We will enroll 20 adult Syn-ILD subjects (a myositis-associated syndrome with a high incidence of ILD approaching 80%), using a 1:1 randomization scheme for active drug:placebo for 24 weeks, thus enrolling 10 subjects to receive SOC plus active drug and 10 subjects to receive SOC plus placebo. All patients will then enter an optional open label follow-up after the 24-week randomized, controlled phase, during which all subjects receive 24 weeks of ABT in the same fashion as the initial study phase.

Sponsor: Bristol Myers Squibb

Genentech Protocol No. ML28681. A multi-center, double-blind, placebo controlled, proof of concept study to evaluate the efficacy and tolerability of tocilizumab in adults with refractory dermatomyositis and polymyositis.

This investigator-initiated multi-center, double-blind, randomized placebo-controlled proof of concept pilot study is evaluating the efficacy and tolerability of tocilizumab (TCZ) in adult dermatomyositis (DM) and polymyositis (PM) patients. Patients must have failed (or are considered intolerant to) an adequate course of glucocorticoids or have failed glucocorticoids plus at least one other immunosuppressive (IS) or immunomodulatory agent (e.g. methotrexate, azathioprine, cyclosporine, tacrolimus, mycophenolate mofetil, cyclophosphamide, IVIg, anti-TNF agent, and rituximab). Participants must be 18 years of age or older with "definite" or "probable" DM or PM. 40 participants will be randomly assigned to TCZ or placebo in a 1:1 ratio (approximately 20 per arm). Participants will complete 10 study visits during this 48-week clinical trial. Study drug will be provided at no cost to participants.

Sponsor: Genentech-Roche

Prospective, Double-blind, Randomized, Phase III Study Evaluating Efficacy and Safety of Human Immunoglobulin in Patients with Dermatomyositis

The primary objective of this multicenter study is to provide confirmatory data on the beneficial effect of human immunoglobulin (Ig) every four weeks compared to placebo in subjects with active dermatomyositis (DM) based on the percentage of responders at Week 16. Patients will receive double-blinded treatment at 4-week intervals of either Ig or placebo. Study participation consists of 12 study visits over a 40-week period. There is a 16-week randomized efficacy period (Octagam 10% or placebo) followed by a 24-week open-label extension period.

Sponsor: Octapharma
**Protocol IM101611: A Phase 3, Randomized, Double-Blind Clinical Trial to Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of Abatacept SC with Standard Treatment Compared to Standard Treatment Alone in Improving Disease Activity in Adults with Active Idiopathic Inflammatory Myopathy (IIM)**

This is a 52-week, Phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicenter study of abatacept in subjects with active Idiopathic Inflammatory Myopathy (including DM, PM and autoimmune necrotizing myopathy) also receiving standard background treatment. The primary objective for this study is to compare the clinical efficacy of weekly abatacept in combination with standard treatment to standard treatment alone by assessing the percentage of subjects who improve using established criteria after 24 weeks. There is a 24 week efficacy period followed by a 28-week open-label extension period.

**Sponsor:** Bristol Myers Squibb

**Predictor of Clinical Response to Acthar in Myositis**

The primary objective of this extension study to a previously published clinical trial from the Myositis Center is to compare the clinical impact of Acthar Gel on myositis patients on a cellular and molecular level before and after treatment. We plan to enroll 10 subjects with inactive disease, 10 healthy controls and 10 subjects that currently have active myositis disease. Patients must have a diagnosis of dermatomyositis or polymyositis and have not previously received Acthar Gel. Patients with active and inactive myositis are assessed at baseline and 6 months. Healthy controls will only be assessed at baseline.

**Sponsor:** Mallinkrodt

**Environmental Risk Factors for the Anti-Synthetase Syndrome – The MYORISK Study**

This study investigates the genetic and environmental risk factors involved in the development of myositis. Adults and children diagnosed with myositis within the last two years may enroll by completing questionnaires, donating blood, and providing dust samples from their home.

Like other complex diseases, autoimmune diseases are the result of numerous causes, including genetic and environmental factors. Some researchers believe that individuals susceptible to autoimmune disorders develop them when the body reacts to environmental or other factors which are being assessed in this NIH-sponsored multicenter trial.

**Sponsor:** National Institute of Health

**Banking of Biological Samples and Collection of Clinical Data for Connective Tissue Disease Research**

The purpose of this project is to set up and maintain a Rheumatology Biological Specimen Bank of blood (i.e. Biorepository) and tissue samples and a parallel Research Databank of computerized medical information for myositis. The repository provides researchers valuable information into the factors that contribute to the onset and course of these diseases. The robust data collected also allows researchers to identify disease progression in myositis patients ultimately improving clinical care decisions. Inclusion Criteria: all ages, male or female, diagnosed by a doctor within the Division of Rheumatology with dermatomyositis, polymyositis, inclusion body myositis, autoimmune ILD, anti-synthetase syndrome or any myositis subset.
Recently Completed Studies

A Phase 2, Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Trial of IMO-8400 in Patients with Dermatomyositis

This multi-center study has the primary objective of assessing the safety and tolerability of IMO-8400 in adult patients with dermatomyositis (DM) with active skin and to assess the effect of IMO-8400 on the cutaneous manifestations of DM. Exploratory objectives will investigate the treatment effects of study drug on indices of disease activity, patient-reported outcomes and pharmacodynamic measures. IMO-8400 is an antagonist to Toll-like receptors (TLRs) 7, 8, and 9 and blocking TLR activation represents a potential mechanism for interrupting the inflammatory cycle offering a potential treatment approach for patients with DM.

Sponsor: Idera Pharmaceuticals

Novel outcome measures in adult myositis using a physical activity monitor and the PROMIS physical function assessments (PAMPRO)

This study will evaluate free-living physical activity (steps, distance, stairs, speed, pattern of activity, energy expenditure and acceleration) measured by a commercial low cost physical activity measurement device as an objective, reliable and valid outcome measure for treatment response in myositis patients. The secondary objective will evaluate the NIH PROMIS physical function tool (PF-20) for reliability, validity and treatment responsiveness in myositis patients and compare it’s psychometric properties with traditional physical function tools (i.e. the HAQ and SF36). Fifty subjects will be enrolled in this 6-month study. Approximately 10 subjects will be asked to continue into a 6-month extension phase of the study.

Sponsor: The Myositis Association (TMA)

Contact Us

If you have patients that you feel would be interested in any of the ongoing trials conducted at the University of Pittsburgh, please contact any of the following Myositis Center staff:

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