

paracetamol or paracetamol/codeine mixtures in the first instance, before consideration of salmon calcitonin. This, in my opinion would be good medical practice, particularly because salmon calcitonin would have to be given by a parenteral route. On the issue of cost, physicians will have to judge the suitability of drugs for osteoporosis depending on their interpretation of efficacy and local price for the individual compounds.

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Intra-articular hyaluronan treatment for osteoarthritis

We wish to comment on the article by Stefan Lohmander in which the results of a placebo controlled study with intra-articular hyaluronan in osteoarthritis of the knee were presented.¹ It was suggested that aged patients with a high disease severity might be the best 'responders' to such a treatment. We felt that it was worthwhile to reanalyse the

Table 1 Lequesne score (ISK) improvements (mean values)

Evaluation time	All patients (40–75 years, ISK baseline 2.0–18.5)			Subgroup (>60 years, ISK baseline >10)		
	Verum (n=95)	Control (n=100)	Intergroup difference	Verum (n=28)	Control (n=26)	Intergroup difference
1 week after last injection	3.5	2.6	0.9	4.6	3.2	1.4
Follow up after 1 month	3.8	2.7	1.1	5.7	3.3	2.4
Follow up after 2 months	4.4	2.8	1.6	6.5	3.6	2.9

data of the patients of our German multicentre study with hyaluronan² to see whether this somewhat unexpected but clinically extremely important hypothesis could be supported. The results of our subgroup analysis clearly seem to indicate again that the patient sample over the age of 60 years and with a high baseline score of >10 Lequesne points is the most likely subgroup to benefit from the treatment (table 1).

Stratified analyses of other methodologically comparable studies or preplanned trials in severe osteoarthritis could contribute to a validated identification of such patients who will probably respond best to an intra-articular treatment with hyaluronan in osteoarthritis of the knee.

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- 1 Lohmander L S, Dalén N, Englund G, Hämäläinen M, Jensen E M, Karlsson K, *et al.* Intra-articular hyaluronan injections in the treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee: a randomised, double blind, placebo controlled multicentre trial. *Ann Rheum Dis* 1996; 55:424-31.
- 2 Puhl W, Bernau A, Greiling H, Köpcke W, Pforringer W, Steck KJ, *et al.* Intra-articular sodium hyaluronate in osteoarthritis of the knee: a multicenter, double-blind study. *Osteoarthritis Cartilage* 1993;1:233-41.