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1 **REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE IN SWITCHING TO NEW EXTENDED HALF-LIFE**
2 **PRODUCTS AT EUROPEAN HAEMOPHILIA CENTERS**

3 Flora Peyvandi,^{1,2} Isabella Garagiola,¹ Marco Boscarino,¹ Aislin Ryan,³ Cedric Hermans,⁴ Mike
4 Makris^{5,6}

5

6 ¹Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Angelo Bianchi Bonomi
7 Hemophilia and Thrombosis Center and Fondazione Luigi Villa, Milan, Italy

8 ²Università degli Studi di Milano, Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation, Milan, Italy

9 ³European Association for Hemophilia and Allied Disorders, Brussels, Belgium

10 ⁴Haemostasis and Thrombosis Unit, Division of Haematology, Cliniques Universitaires Saint-Luc,
11 Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels, Belgium

12 ⁵Department of Infection, Immunity and Cardiovascular Disease, University of Sheffield

13 ⁶Sheffield Haemophilia and Thrombosis Centre, Sheffield, UK

14

15 Flora Peyvandi: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7423-9864>

16 Isabella Garagiola: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0137-6910>

17 Cedric Hermans: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5429-8437>

18 Mike Makris: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7622-7939>

19

20 **Corresponding author:** Flora Peyvandi, MD, PhD

21 Fondazione IRCCS Ca'Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Angelo Bianchi Bonomi

22 Hemophilia and Thrombosis Center, Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation,

23 Università degli Studi di Milano, Via Pace 9, 20122, Milan, Italy

24 Fax: +39-02-54100125; email: flora.peyvandi@unimi.it

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1 **Abstract**

2 The concept of replacement therapy in haemophilia is changing significantly thanks to the
3 switch from standard products to extended half-life products. These novel drugs are showing
4 beneficial effects overcoming current prophylaxis limitations by reducing the infusion frequency,
5 maintaining a higher trough level to ensure a lower risk of bleeding, and making treatment
6 significantly less distressing to patients by improving the quality of life. Real-life data on the
7 efficacy of novel drugs and their impact on routine management of haemophilia A and B patients is
8 still limited. This manuscript reports the results of a European survey conducted by the European
9 Association for Haemophilia and Allied Disorders (EAHAD) at the beginning of 2018 on the
10 clinical management of patients using extended half-life recombinant FVIII and FIX fusion
11 products, since at the time of the survey none of the PEGylated products were available yet. We
12 report data on the efficacy of these novel drugs by 33 European haemophilia centers that have
13 already switched to extended half-life fusion products, showing a significant reduction in the
14 number of infusions and a satisfactory trough levels in the clinical care of haemophilia patients,
15 with a greater impact for haemophilia B.

16

17

1 INTRODUCTION

2

3 The clinical picture of haemophilia is characterized by bleeding episodes that occur either
4 spontaneously, in the most severe cases, or as a result of trauma. Repeated spontaneous bleeding
5 episodes mainly affect muscles and joints and lead to chronic arthropathy, with loss of joint
6 movement and fixed flexion deformity (1,2). Prophylaxis with standard FVIII and FIX products is
7 effective at preventing joint damage and decreasing the frequency of hemorrhagic events, as
8 demonstrated in young boys with severe haemophilia (3), but does not assure a complete protection
9 from bleeding with a maximum trough level of 1-2%. However, prophylaxis protocols with these
10 products require recurrent venipuncture (2-3 times per week), and this is one of the main reasons
11 why patients, particularly children and adolescents, decline or discontinue treatment.

12 Extending the half-life of recombinant products is thought to ease patient management by
13 reducing dosage frequency and prolonging protection from bleeding, which could improve
14 compliance and make this therapy less distressing to the patient (4). Over the last ten years,
15 recombinant factor (F)VIII products for haemophilia A and FIX products for haemophilia B have
16 been remodeled to prolong their half-lives by chemical modification using polyethylene glycol
17 (PEG) polymers and fusion to the fragment crystallizable (Fc) region of an IgG₁ or, alternatively, to
18 human albumin (5-7). The half-lives of the new EHL recombinant FVIII products are
19 approximately 1.5- to 1.6-fold longer compared with standard products (8-10) reducing the
20 frequency of infusions by 30%-35% with a prophylaxis regimen of twice weekly using
21 recombinant FVIII fused to Fc or once every five or seven days using PEGylated concentrates (8-
22 10). These prophylaxis schemes maintain a higher trough FVIII level than standard products: ~3
23 IU/dL (3%) (11).

24 EHL recombinant FIX products with a 3-6 fold half-life extension of compared with standard
25 products have certainly simplified the prophylactic regimen of haemophilia B patients, who receive
26 infusions once every 7-14 days in the prophylactic regimen while maintaining FIX trough levels
27 above 5-10% (8-10). Moreover, an ongoing clinical trial with recombinant FIX albumin fusion is
28 investigating whether the dosing interval could be extended to 21 days (clinicaltrials.gov:
29 NCT02053792) (12). Clinical trial outcomes have shown for both EHL recombinant FVIII and FIX
30 drugs that prophylaxis regimens are associated with very low annualized bleeding rates (ABRs)
31 compared to on-demand treatment (11,13-16). These results make such therapies significantly less
32 distressing to the patient (particularly in the case of FIX) and are likely to improve their quality of
33 life (17,18).

1 EHL products have been licensed at different times in the USA and Europe. In the USA, EHL
2 products were available much earlier than in Europe due to the differences between US Food and
3 Drug Administration (FDA) and European Medicines Agency (EMA) regulations for authorizing
4 new products (19). At the beginning of 2018, EHL products available in Europe were limited to
5 recombinant FVIII and FIX fusion products. Real-life evidences have greater value than clinical
6 trials as they provide more accurate responses to questions about patient health and the safety and
7 effectiveness of medical products. Data on the real-life effectiveness of EHL products is still limited
8 and has been reported mainly at international meetings and in a few published reports (20-29).

9 In this paper, we report the preliminary data on real-life experiences at European haemophilia
10 treatment centers (HTCs), according to a survey administered by the European Association for
11 Haemophilia and Allied Disorders (EAHAD) on the adoption and clinical management of patients
12 using available novel EHL FVIII and FIX products.

13 The survey was conducted at the beginning of 2018, when a limited number of new EHL
14 products were available in European countries.

15

16 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

17 We administered a survey to determine the efficacy of EHL products after they became
18 available in several European countries. At the time of the survey (January 2018), a limited number
19 of EHL products were available: recombinant FVIII and FIX fused to Fc (rFVIII-Fc and rFIX-Fc)
20 and recombinant FIX fused to albumin (rFIX-FP). As for PEGylated products, PEGylated FVIII
21 (BAY94-9027) was not yet approved by the regulatory agency in Europe (EMA), and PEGylated
22 FVIII (BAX855) was approved the same month as our survey (January 2018) but was not yet
23 available at European HTCs. A decision on glycoPEGylated products (N8-GP) was still pending,
24 and recombinant FIX glycoPEGylated (N9-GP) had been licensed in 2017 but was not yet marketed
25 during the survey.

26 Our unbiased approach to data collection provides a snapshot of the real European experience,
27 and could be used as a baseline from which to compare results over time.

28 The questionnaire was sent by the EAHAD, in January 2018, to 48 certified European HTCs
29 belonging to the European Haemophilia Network (EUHANET)
30 (<https://www.euhass.org/aspxpages/certcentres.aspx>).

31 Each HTCs was asked how long time their center had been using each of the EHL products,
32 what type of EHL product was available at their center, the percentage of haemophilia A and B
33 patients who had switched to EHL products, and the beneficial effects of EHL products in terms of
34 number of infusions, achieved trough level, and percent reduction in bleeding events.

1 Ethical approval was not required for this study, as the data was collected anonymously and not
2 individually. Our questionnaire did not request specific data for individual patients but general
3 information about the efficacy observed by the HTC's after switching their patients to EHL
4 products.

5

6 **RESULTS**

7 Thirty-three European HTC's out of 48 submitted a completed questionnaire to EAHAD.
8 The recombinant FVIII fusion product (rFVIII-Fc) was the EHL drug used routinely for
9 haemophilia A at 76% of the responding centers (25/33). In detail, 55% (18/33) had been regularly
10 using the rFVIII-Fc product for more than a year, 18% (6/33) had experience with this product for
11 three to seven months and only 3% (1/33) had been using it for less than three months. The
12 remaining 24% (8/33) had not yet used it in clinical care (Figure 1). Of these, six European HTC's
13 (Portugal, Czech Republic, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina and two centers in Turkey) reported that the
14 new rFVIII-Fc was not available yet, while at the remaining two HTC's, one in Bulgaria and one in
15 France, the product was available but not being used by the physicians.

16 As for EHL recombinant FIX concentrates, 64% of the responding haemophilia centers (21/33)
17 were regularly using these new drugs. Fourteen centers had experience with both rFIX-Fc and rFIX-
18 FP products, while four used only the rFIX-Fc product and three used only the rFIX-FP. Forty
19 percent (13/33) of the centers had been using the EHL drugs regularly for more than a year, 21%
20 (7/33) for three to seven months, and 3% (1/33) for less than three months. Thirty-six percent
21 (12/33) had not yet used EHL recombinant FIX fusion products for the clinical management of
22 haemophilia B (Figure 1). Of these, at five European HTC's (Portugal, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina,
23 and two centers in Turkey), the new EHL recombinant FIX products were not commercially
24 available, while at HTC's in Greece, Finland, Spain (Madrid), UK (London), and France (Paris), the
25 products were available but the centers had not yet switched their patients to the EHL products.

26

27 ***Efficacy data on EHL drug for haemophilia A (rFVIII-Fc)***

28 Twenty-five out of 33 HTC's submitted a reply on the efficacy of the EHL recombinant FVIII fusion
29 product and about 72% of these centers (18/25) had switched less than 10% of their haemophilia A
30 patients from standard products to rFVIII-Fc drug. Two of them (8%) had switched 60-80% of their
31 patients, and none had switched more than 80% (Figure 2).

32 The positive effects of EHL rFVIII-Fc were evaluated considering the reduction in infusions,
33 trough FVIII level and decrease in bleeding events.

1 Sixty-six percent of the responding HTC (15/23) reported a 30% or greater reduction in the
2 number of infusions (Figure 3). The number of infusions decreased by 10% for 17% of the HTCs
3 (4/23), while another 17% reported a decrease of 20%.

4 Regarding trough level, 33% of the HTCs (7/21) achieved a trough FVIII level of 1-3% and
5 67% (14/21) achieved a trough FVIII level of 3-5%, while none observed a trough level of more
6 than 5% (Figure 3).

7 In terms of bleeding events, most centers (57%; 12/21) observed a decrease of less than 20%,
8 28% (6/21) reported a reduction of the bleeds of 20-50%, while only 5% (1/21) observed a decrease
9 of 50-99%. Ten percent of the responding HTCs (2/21) reported a 100% decrease in bleeds (Figure
10 3).

11 12 ***Efficacy data on EHL drugs for haemophilia B (rFIX-Fc and rFIX-FP)***

13 Forty-three percent of responding HTCs (9/21) using EHL drugs for haemophilia B had switched
14 10-40% of their haemophilia B patients from standard therapy to the EHL recombinant FIX
15 concentrates. Nineteen percent (4/21) had switched the majority of their patients (80-100%) to EHL
16 products (Figure 2).

17 All responding HTCs revealed a reduction in infusions of more than 30% (Figure 3).

18 The clinical use of EHL recombinant FIX products led to an FIX trough level of at least 5-10%
19 in 67% of centers (14/21), while 19% (4/21) achieved an FIX trough level of 3-5% (Figure 3). Only
20 three centers (14%) observed a low trough level of 1-3%.

21 A 100% decrease in bleeding events was reported in almost one third of the responding centers
22 (5/18), while 33% (6/18) observed a decrease of 20-50% and 39% of the centers (7/18) revealed a
23 decrease in bleeding episodes of less than 20% (Figure 3).

24 25 **DISCUSSION**

26 The concept of haemophilia replacement therapy is changing thanks to the introduction and
27 licensing of novel EHL recombinant FVIII and FIX products in the European market. A well
28 designed study to assess the real efficacy and safety of these novel EHL drugs is needed to allow
29 proper use in the routine clinical care of bleeding events, prophylaxis, and surgical management of
30 patients with haemophilia A and B, and to work toward the possible revision of prophylactic
31 treatment schedules.

32 In this report, we provide very preliminary data on the efficacy of a few novel EHL drugs
33 (rFVIII-Fc, rFIX-Fc and rFIX-FP) that were commercially available in Europe at the time of the
34 EAHAD survey, with 33 responding European HTCs. The survey suffers from a few limitations.

1 First, our data does not include PEGylated FVIII and FIX products, which were not yet available in
2 Europe at the time of the survey so results are limited to the three EHL fusion products mentioned
3 above. Additionally, we do not report any data on safety assessment, which is not completely
4 known and requires a proper long-term surveillance using a consensus minimal dataset collection
5 tool as recommended by the ISTH Scientific and Standardization Subcommittee (SSC) working
6 group (30). The onset of inhibitors is an important safety issue relating to newly licensed EHL
7 drugs, to be addressed when data from the ongoing previously untreated patients (PUPs) studies is
8 available. Another significant safety issue is the potential risk of PEG accumulation in haemophilia
9 associated with long-term and chronic administration (31,32). Long-term surveillance is required to
10 understand the effect of longstanding PEG exposure. The currently available information obtained
11 from the approved PEGylated products does not indicate any specific human toxicity, as these
12 products are not for life-long use as is the case for haemophilia.

13 The outcomes reported by the 33 responding HTC to the EAHAD survey showed a beneficial
14 effect of EHL FVIII products in reducing the number of infusions, by $\geq 30\%$ in 66% of the
15 responding HTCs using the new drugs; in trough levels, where a value of 3-5% was reached by
16 67% of centers; and in decreasing bleeding episodes by $\leq 50\%$ at 86% (18/21) of responding HTCs.
17 The number of patients switched to EHL drugs was still low, with the majority of HTCs (72%)
18 having switched less than 10% of their haemophilia A patients. Recent real-world experiences have
19 also confirmed our survey data that treatment with the new EHL recombinant FVIII products
20 reduces the number of infusions by 30-40% with a substantially lower ABR in patients receiving
21 prophylaxis compared to on-demand treatment (20-29,33,34).

22 Our survey on EHL recombinant FIX showed a significant reduction in infusion frequency at
23 100% of the centers, with 67% achieving a trough FIX level of at least 5 to 10%. Forty-three percent
24 of HTCs have switched 10-40% of their patients from standard therapy to EHL drugs. Recent
25 publications on real-world outcomes have shown a 50-60% reduction in infusions, confirming our
26 preliminary analysis at European HTCs (21,22,28,29,33-37). Therefore, this very preliminary data
27 obtained by survey reflects beneficial efficacy effects in both haemophilia A and haemophilia B
28 using EHL fusion products, with especially pronounced results in haemophilia B. These novel
29 products have almost made it possible to improve severe haemophilia A patients to moderate
30 phenotype by following an infusion schedule of two times a week or every five days, and to alter
31 the clinical picture of haemophilia B patients from severe to mild phenotype through one single
32 infusion every 7 or 10 days. It would be worthwhile to conduct another survey of the same
33 European HTCs in the near future, to monitor the usage rate, efficacy, and also the safety of these
34 novel products.

1 These new drugs are also becoming more widely used in clinical practice in the United States,
2 such that the proportion of patients switched to prophylaxis with EHL recombinant FVIII and FIX
3 has increased substantially since FDA approval. Recent data by Aledort et al (33) showed that the
4 number of haemophilia A patients switched to EHL recombinant FVIII increased from 13% in 2014
5 to 21% in 2018, and for the haemophilia B patients, the number rose from 25% in 2014 to 57% in
6 2018 (33). Recent data presented during the ASH 2018 annual meeting by the American
7 Thrombosis and Hemostasis Network (ATHN) reported that 21% of patients with moderate or
8 severe haemophilia A and 42% of patients with moderate or severe haemophilia B have received
9 prophylaxis using an EHL product (34). The shift to EHL drugs is transforming haemophilia care
10 by achieving improved bleeding control and higher trough levels, thereby improving long-term joint
11 protection.

12 More real-life experience is necessary to provide insights into how physicians and patients
13 make treatment choices and into the dosing regimens used in the clinical setting. Evaluating the
14 safety of these new drugs is of the utmost importance and should be monitored through careful,
15 long-term observation of any unexpected effects occurring after marketing authorization. Recently,
16 following recommendations published by the ISTH Scientific and Standardization Subcommittee
17 (SSC) on Factor VIII, Factor IX and Rare Coagulation Disorders for post-registration surveillance
18 of new drugs in haemophilia (30), a new pharmacovigilance system for EHL products has been
19 developed in the form of a mobile phone app (mAPPHemo) that patients and their physicians can
20 use to record treatments and any complications that may arise. This tool, or any other national or
21 international surveillance system such as the pharmacovigilance program of EUHASS, will be
22 helpful in identifying all known and unknown side effects of these newly licensed products.
23 Recently, the EMA also reported the importance of long-term surveillance.

24 In conclusion, the arrival of novel EHL drugs and their widespread adoption have changed the
25 clinical management of haemophilia A by reducing the number of infusions and achieving higher
26 trough levels and better protection. These effects appear to be even more significant for
27 haemophilia B patients. The safety and efficacy of new concentrates has to be monitored
28 continuously in order to update haemophilia management and develop evidence-based guidelines
29 for the correct use of new EHL drugs in the routine clinical care of haemophilia.

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4

5

1 **Authorship**

2 F.P. and I.G. contributed to the development and writing of the manuscript, M.B. analyzed the data.
3 A.R., C.H. and M.M. revised the manuscript providing critical input and participated in data
4 submission.

5

6 **Conflict of interest**

7 F.P. has received honoraria for participating as a speaker at satellite symposia organized by
8 Alnylam, Grifols, Kedrion, Roche, Takeda. F.P. reports participation at advisory board of
9 Bioverativ, Roche, Sanofi and Takeda.

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1 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

2 **Figure 1.** Number and percentage of European HTC by usage time of new EHL products for the
3 treatment of haemophilia A (left) and B (right).

4
5 **Figure 2.** Percentage of haemophilia patients switched from standard products to EHL recombinant
6 FVIII and EHL recombinant FIX drugs.

7
8 **Figure 3.** Efficacy of EHL FVIII and FIX concentrates: reduction of infusions, trough level and
9 reduction of bleeding events.

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