

The Effect of Darbepoetin Alfa (long acting erythropoietin) in Subjects with Thalassemia Intermedia (Alpha and Beta)

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Synopsis:

Thalassemia intermedia (alpha and beta) is characterized by a low red blood cell count (anemia). This can vary from mild to severe depending on the patient. When the anemia is more severe, the patient may need to receive blood transfusions. However, most patients do not need to be transfused, but experience signs of anemia. These include feeling tired, occasional headaches, irritability, and limited tolerance for exercise and physical activity. These symptoms generally get worse with age since the Hemoglobin level may drop over time and the body ability to cope with a certain level of anemia decreases. Medications that can increase the Hemoglobin levels, like erythropoietin, will correct some of the anemia and result in fewer symptoms related to the anemia.

Erythropoietin (EPO) has been used for approximately 5 years in many situations of low red blood cells (anemia), since it makes the body produce more red cells. It was also used successfully in thalassemia. It is given under the skin (SQ) as a shot, or it can be given in the vein (IV). The specific type of EPO to be used in this study named Darbepoetin alfa, works the same as EPO, however it has an advantage over EPO, of a longer action time. It can therefore be given only once a week or once in two weeks, instead of three times a week.