



Early View

Original article

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Please cite this article as: Loebinger MR, Polverino E, Chalmers JD, *et al.* Efficacy and safety of TOBI Podhaler® in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*-infected bronchiectasis patients: iBEST study. *Eur Respir J* 2020; in press (<https://doi.org/10.1183/13993003.01451-2020>).

This manuscript has recently been accepted for publication in the *European Respiratory Journal*. It is published here in its accepted form prior to copyediting and typesetting by our production team. After these production processes are complete and the authors have approved the resulting proofs, the article will move to the latest issue of the ERJ online.

Title

Efficacy and safety of TOBI Podhaler® in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*-infected bronchiectasis patients: iBEST study

Authors

Michael R Loebinger^{1,2}, Eva Polverino³, James D Chalmers⁴, Harm AWM Tiddens^{5,6}, Herman Goossens⁷, Michael Tunney⁸, Felix C Ringhausen⁹, Adam T Hill¹⁰, Rashidkhan Pathan¹¹, Gerhild Angyalosi¹², Francesco Blasi^{13,14}, Stuart J Elborn^{2,15,16}, Charles S Haworth^{17,18}, on behalf of the iBEST-1 Trial Team

Affiliations

¹Host Defence Unit, Royal Brompton Hospital and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK;

²Imperial College London, London, UK;

³Respiratory Disease Department, Vall d' Hebron University Hospital – VHIR, Barcelona, Spain;

⁴Scottish Centre for Respiratory Research, University of Dundee, Ninewells Hospital and Medical School, Dundee, Scotland, UK;

⁵Department of Paediatric Pulmonology and Allergology, Erasmus Medical Centre Sophia Children's Hospital, Rotterdam, The Netherlands;

⁶Department of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine, Erasmus Medical Centre, Rotterdam, The Netherlands;

⁷Department of Clinical Microbiology, University Hospital Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium;

⁸Halo Research Group, School of Pharmacy, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, UK;

⁹Department of Respiratory Medicine, Hannover Medical School, and Biomedical Research in End-stage and Obstructive Lung Disease Hannover (BREATH), German Center for Lung Research (DZL), Hannover, Germany;

¹⁰Department of Respiratory Medicine, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, and University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK;

¹¹Novartis Healthcare Private Limited, Hyderabad, India

¹²Novartis Pharma AG, Basel, Switzerland;

¹³Internal Medicine Department, Respiratory Unit and Adult Cystic Fibrosis Center, Fondazione IRCCS Cà Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy;

¹⁴Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation, Università degli Studi di Milano, Milan, Italy;

¹⁵Halo Research Group, Centre for Experimental Medicine, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, UK;

¹⁶Imperial College and Royal Brompton Hospital and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK;

¹⁷Cambridge Centre for Lung Infection, Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridge, UK

¹⁸Department of Medicine, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Corresponding author

Michael R Loebinger

Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Foundation Trust, London, United Kingdom.

E-mail address: M.Loebinger@rbht.nhs.uk

Take-home message

Inhaled dry powder tobramycin (TOBI Podhaler[®]) significantly reduced *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* sputum density and was well tolerated in patients with bronchiectasis.

Introduction

Bronchiectasis (BE) is characterised by the presence of chronic and progressive inflammatory airway destruction that leads to repeated exacerbations [1]. In 2013, the prevalence of BE in the USA and the UK was estimated to be 139 cases and 486–566 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively [2, 3]. A higher prevalence of BE is seen with increasing age and in women [4, 5]. Globally, BE is thought to be the third most common chronic respiratory disease, after asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) [5].

Global mortality rates associated with BE have been reported to be 10–30% at 5 years and up to 35% at 15 years [6]. Recently, a study in Germany has shown that BE is associated with substantial mortality and financial burden [7]. *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in the sputum of patients with BE is a key driver of inflammation [8, 9]. Chronic *P. aeruginosa* infection is associated with frequent exacerbations, worsening of forced expiratory volume in 1 second (FEV₁), a three-fold increase in mortality, a seven-fold increase in risk of hospitalisation and worsening quality of life (QoL) [6, 10, 11].

In the recent European Respiratory Society (ERS) and British Thoracic Society (BTS) guidelines, long-term use of inhaled antibiotics, having localised airway delivery with minimal systemic exposure, are recommended for patients with BE, chronic *P. aeruginosa* infection and frequent pulmonary exacerbations [4, 12]. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis involving 16 randomised clinical trials with over 2500 patients, demonstrated that inhaled antibiotics consistently reduce bacterial sputum density and achieve a small but statistically significant reduction (rate ratio [RR] 0.81, 0.67 to 0.97; p=0.020) in the exacerbation frequency in patients with BE [15].

Despite recommendations from ERS and BTS for use of oral/inhaled antibiotics, there is currently no inhaled antibiotic approved for the treatment of BE. Most inhaled antibiotic trials have been conducted using an on/off strategy designed to minimise the emergence of antimicrobial resistance. There is lack of evidence comparing continuous *versus* intermittent inhaled antibiotic administration for BE, and the European guidelines make no recommendation regarding the therapeutic regimen [16].

Tobramycin inhalation powder (TIP), TOBI Podhaler[®], has a proven efficacy and safety profile, and has been approved for the management of chronic *P. aeruginosa* pulmonary infection in patients with cystic fibrosis (CF). A potential benefit of the dry powder formulation is the reduced time burden compared with nebulised delivery, which may enhance treatment adherence [13, 14]. Several prospective studies with tobramycin solution for inhalation document its role in improving clinical BE symptoms, reducing *P. aeruginosa* sputum density and improving QoL for BE patients. However, data on adverse events (AEs) from these studies are not consistent and in the absence of more contemporary safety data, use of inhaled tobramycin in patients with BE is limited [17–19].

This study aimed to determine the efficacy of a safe and well-tolerated dose and regimen of TIP on *P. aeruginosa* sputum density in patients with BE. We tested the hypothesis that there is a dose-dependent effect of TIP on bacterial density and tolerability in patients with BE.

Patients and Methods

Study design

This was a multicentre, phase II, randomised, double-blind, parallel-group, dose- and regimen-finding study that evaluated the efficacy, safety and tolerability of three different doses of TIP in patients with radiological evidence of BE and chronic *P. aeruginosa* infection.

Participants were randomised in 1:1:1 ratio to one of three treatment cohorts in addition to the local standard of care: Cohort A received three capsules of TIP once daily (84 mg); Cohort B, five capsules once daily (O.D.; 140 mg); and Cohort C, four capsules twice daily (B.I.D.; 224 mg). Each capsule was of 28 mg dosage strength and inhaled via the T-326 Inhaler. Within each cohort, patients were randomised in 2:2:1 ratio to receive either continuous TIP, or cyclical TIP/placebo (cycles of TIP for 28 days, alternating with placebo for 28 days) or placebo. Treatment duration of 16 weeks (112 days) was followed by an 8-week (56-day) follow-up. The study design has been previously published and presented in **Figure 1** [20]. Recruitment was closed after the acquisition of the product by another company when 107/180 patients were recruited. This did not lead to any changes to the study protocol. However, the following previously planned analysis were not performed due to reduced sample size:

- a. Subgroup analysis using age group, gender, bronchiectasis severity index (BSI) in patients with pulmonary exacerbations at screening
- b. Primary efficacy analysis after excluding patients who were not confirmed *P. aeruginosa* positive at baseline
- c. Primary efficacy analysis using multiple imputations where the respective treatment effect replaced missing values
- d. Primary efficacy analysis using multiple imputations to account for patients who required treatment with anti-pseudomonal antibiotics for exacerbation post-baseline and up to and including Day 29, by assuming the placebo treatment effect for those subjects requiring anti-pseudomonal treatment.

Due to the early recruitment halt and reduced sample size, the inferential analysis should be considered as exploratory and the results obtained should be interpreted with the caution.

Patients

Included in the study were patients (aged ≥ 18 years) with a proven diagnosis (confirmed via chest computed tomography [CT] scan) of BE and a history of ≥ 2 exacerbations treated with oral antibiotics or ≥ 1 exacerbation requiring parenteral antibiotic treatment as well as *P. aeruginosa* documented in a respiratory sample (expectorated sputum, deep-throat cough swab, oropharyngeal swab or bronchoalveolar lavage) at least once within the 12 months prior to screening. Patients with FEV₁ $\geq 30\%$ predicted and a positive *P. aeruginosa* sputum culture at screening were considered eligible. Patients with a history of CF, a primary diagnosis of smoking-associated COPD, a primary diagnosis of bronchial asthma and local or systemic hypersensitivity to aminoglycosides or inhaled antibiotics were not eligible. Pregnant and/or lactating women were also excluded. Other inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed in the study design manuscript [20].

Ethical consideration

The study was conducted in accordance with the International Council for Harmonization Good Clinical Practice (GCP) regulations/guidelines and the ethical principles set forth in the Declaration of Helsinki. Either independent ethics committee or institutional review board approved the protocol. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before the start of the study. An independent data monitoring committee regularly reviewed the safety data.

Outcomes

Efficacy endpoints

Primary endpoint

Change from baseline to Day 29 in *P. aeruginosa* density in sputum (\log_{10} colony forming units [CFUs]) was evaluated to demonstrate the effect of different doses of TIP.

Selected secondary endpoints

Antimicrobial efficacy of TIP over the entire study duration; effect of different doses of TIP and different regimens on pulmonary exacerbation at the end of the treatment epoch (Day 113) and over the study period; efficacy profile of different doses of TIP and different regimens as measured by anti-pseudomonal antibiotic usage during the treatment epoch (through Day 113) and study period were evaluated.

Safety endpoints

Incidence rate and severity of AEs and serious AEs (SAEs) were assessed to evaluate the safety and tolerability profile of different TIP doses and treatment regimens over the treatment period and study duration. Evaluation of clinical and laboratory parameters, post-inhalation events, measurement of bronchial hyperactivity and audiology testing were performed.

Selected exploratory endpoints

Treatment effect of TIP on the Respiratory Symptom Scale Quality of Life Questionnaire for Bronchiectasis (QoL-B RSS) was evaluated along with other scales of the QoL-B (*e.g.* physical functioning, vitality, and health perceptions).

Statistical methods

Data were summarised and analysed by cohort/dose, treatment groups (including combined treatments) and/or pooled by continuous, cyclical and placebo as appropriate. For the efficacy analyses, the placebo patients were pooled from the three cohorts.

Descriptive statistics (n, mean, SD, median, minimum and maximum) for patient demographics including age, weight, height, gender and other baseline characteristics were calculated for continuous data. Categorical data were summarised using 'n' and percentages based on the number of non-missing values.

The primary efficacy endpoint was analysed using the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) model using treatment and baseline macrolide use as fixed-effect factors, and baseline CFU (in \log_{10} unit), as covariate. Step-wise Dunnett's procedure was used to control the family-wise type-I error rate at 5%.

Hazard ratios and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were provided for time to event variables using a Cox regression model. RRs and 95% CIs were provided for count data using a generalised linear model. An *ad-hoc* analysis of area under curve (AUC) for change from baseline in CFU (in \log_{10} unit) were performed using an ANCOVA model using the same set of factors/covariates as included in primary analysis.

Data analysis was performed by ICON. Statistical analyses were performed using SAS[®] Version 9.4. Further details of the statistical methods are provided in **Supplementary methods**.

Results

In total, 186 patients were screened from six countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK), 107 of whom were randomised (of 180 planned) to the three different treatment cohorts. Seventy-nine (42.5%) patients failed screening. **Table 1** presents the patient demographics, disease characteristics and other baseline parameters.

The majority of patients were female (61.7%) except in the placebo group of Cohort A (42.9%). The mean (SD) age across all treatment subgroups was 63.4 (13.6) years except for cyclical TIP in Cohort A (57.5 [11.8] years) and placebo group in Cohort C (71.3 [10.4] years); 57.9% were aged ≥ 65 years. The majority of patients were Caucasian (89.7%); in Cohort C all patients were Caucasians. These variations within the demographics between the treatment cohorts was expected for the given patient population size and also due to the enrollment from six different European countries (UK: 24.3%, Spain: 24.3%, Italy: 15.9%, Germany: 15.0%, France: 15.0%, and Belgium: 5.6%).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of patients enrolled in the study

Characteristic	Cohort A: 3 capsules O.D.			Cohort B: 5 capsules O.D.			Cohort C: 4 capsules B.I.D.			Total (n=107)
	TIP (n=14)	TIP/ PBO (n=13)	PBO (n=7)	TIP (n=15)	TIP/PBO (n=14)	PBO (n=7)	TIP (n=15)	TIP/PBO (n=15)	PBO (n=7)	
Age, n (%)										
<65 years	6 (42.9)	10 (76.9)	4 (57.1)	6 (40.0)	6 (42.9)	1 (14.3)	5 (33.3)	6 (40.0)	1 (14.3)	45 (42.1)
≥65 years	8 (57.1)	3 (23.1)	3 (42.9)	9 (60.0)	8 (57.1)	6 (85.7)	10 (66.7)	9 (60.0)	6 (85.7)	62 (57.9)
Age (years)										
Mean (SD)	63.4 (12.7)	57.5 (11.8)	61.3 (7.5)	64.3 (17.9)	62.4 (16.7)	69.1 (13.2)	66.1 (12.2)	60.8 (13.0)	71.3 (10.4)	63.4 (13.7)
Min–Max	39–82	40–80	52–71	21–81	19–82	40–77	33–86	35–75	49–81	19–86
Sex, n (%)										
Male	5 (35.7)	3 (23.1)	4 (57.1)	5 (33.3)	7 (50.0)	1 (14.3)	6 (40.0)	7 (46.7)	3 (42.9)	41 (38.3)
Female	9 (64.3)	10 (76.9)	3 (42.9)	10 (66.7)	7 (50.0)	6 (85.7)	9 (60.0)	8 (53.3)	4 (57.1)	66 (61.7)
Race, n (%)										
Caucasian	12 (85.7)	11 (84.6)	7 (100.0)	13 (86.7)	11 (78.6)	5 (71.4)	15 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	96 (89.7)
Others	2 (14.3)	2 (15.4)	0	2 (13.3)	3 (21.4)	2 (28.6)	0	0	0	11 (10.3)
BMI (kg/m²)										
Mean (SD)	24.6 (4.0)	25.1 (4.3)	24.5 (4.9)	24.0 (4.3)	25.7 (3.6)	22.9 (5.4)	24.5 (4.5)	24.5 (4.1)	26.4 (5.6)	24.7 (4.2)
Min–Max	17.4–32.0	18.9–32.3	19.6–31.6	16.6–35.7	20.0–31.2	17.0–29.6	16.8–32.0	18.8–32.4	19.7–37.3	16.6–37.3
FEV₁ % predicted										
Mean (SD)	58.9 (25.6)	64.0 (16.5)	64.3 (25.5)	62.4 (26.3)	58.7 (22.4)	54.7 (16.6)	60.8 (21.1)	53.9 (17.4)	59.5 (11.4)	59.7 (20.8)
Min–Max	32.2–104.0	34.5–94.2	26.7–104.4	29.0–135.1	24.0–96.1	27.6–72.4	30.5–111.6	31.5–93.5	44.1–76.9	24.0–135.1
BSI										
Mean (SD)	11.1 (2.2)	8.6 (2.9)	9.4 (3.8)	10.7 (2.8)	10.0 (4.1)	11.7 (2.6)	10.9 (4.4)	8.6 (2.4)	13.0 (3.5)	10.3 (3.4)
Min–Max	8–15	5–14	6–16	4–14	5–19	8–15	6–19	4–14	9–19	4–19
Number of pulmonary exacerbations in the past 12 months, n (%)										
≤2	8 (57.1)	8 (61.5)	5 (71.4)	10 (66.7)	6 (42.9)	5 (71.4)	9 (60.0)	14 (93.3)	3 (42.9)	68 (63.6)
≥3	6 (42.9)	5 (38.5)	2 (28.6)	5 (33.3)	8 (57.1)	2 (28.6)	6 (40.0)	1 (6.7)	4 (57.1)	39 (36.4)

Characteristic	Cohort A: 3 capsules O.D.			Cohort B: 5 capsules O.D.			Cohort C: 4 capsules B.I.D.			Total
	TIP (n=14)	TIP/PBO (n=13)	PBO (n=7)	TIP (n=15)	TIP/PBO (n=14)	PBO (n=7)	TIP (n=15)	TIP/PBO (n=15)	PBO (n=7)	(n=107)
Mean (SD)	2.8 (1.4)	2.5 (1.1)	2.4 (0.8)	2.7 (1.7)	2.6 (0.8)	2.4 (1.3)	3.2 (2.0)	1.9 (0.5)	2.9 (1.4)	2.6 (1.3)
Min – Max	1–6	1–5	2–4	1–8	1–4	1–5	1–8	1–3	1–5	1–8
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i> sputum density (log₁₀ CFU) at baseline										
Mean (SD)	6.8 (1.2)	7.7 (1.5)	5.5 (1.8)	6.1 (2.4)	7.0 (1.8)	8.2 (1.8)	6.8 (0.9)	5.7 (1.9)	7.6 (1.5)	6.7 (1.8)
Min – Max	4.8–8.9	4.8–10.2	2.0–7.2	2.0–9.0	3.9–10.1	6.1–10.9	4.9–8.3	2.0–9.2	5.7–9.7	2.0–10.9
Baseline tobramycin MIC, n (%)										
>8 µg/mL	2 (12.5)	0	0	0	1 (5.9)	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	4 (3.3)
≤8 µg/mL	14 (87.5)	16 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	16 (94.1)	9 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	14 (93.3)	9 (100.0)	119 (96.7)
Concomitant medications, n (%)										
Macrolides	4 (28.6)	4 (30.8)	2 (28.6)	5 (33.3)	5 (35.7)	2 (28.6)	4 (26.7)	5 (33.3)	2 (28.6)	33 (30.8)
Bronchodilators*	14 (100.0)	10 (76.9)	6 (85.7)	13 (86.7)	11 (78.6)	4 (57.1)	14 (93.3)	12 (80.0)	5 (71.4)	89 (83.2)
Inhaled corticosteroids	1 (7.1)	2 (15.4)	0	2 (13.3)	2 (14.3)	1 (14.3)	2 (13.3)	3 (20.0)	0	13 (12.1)

B.I.D., twice daily; BMI, body mass index; BSI, bronchiectasis severity index; CFU, colony forming unit; FEV₁, forced expiratory volume in 1 second; Max, maximum; MIC, minimum inhibitory concentration; Min, minimum; N/n, number of patients; O.D., once daily; PBO, placebo; SD, standard deviation; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.

Age was calculated from date of informed consent and year of birth. Weight and height were taken from screening vital signs evaluations. BMI was calculated based on raw data measurements.

*Includes both short- and long-acting bronchodilators.

Percentage calculated based on number of female patients.

From the ANCOVA model it was shown that treatment effect ($p \leq 0.0001$) and baseline \log_{10} CFU was statistically significant ($p = 0.0003$), whereas macrolide use was not statically significant ($p = 0.7742$). All three doses of TIP reduced the *P. aeruginosa* sputum density from baseline to Day 29 significantly ($p \leq 0.0001$) when compared with placebo (**Figure 2**).

Antimicrobial efficacy of TIP *versus* placebo over the entire study duration showed the highest least square (LS) mean difference in Cohort C. In addition, higher doses achieved higher reductions in *P. aeruginosa* sputum density (**Supplementary Figure 1a** and **Supplementary Figure 1b**). These results were consistent with the changes in CFUs measured as AUC: a higher decrease (negative AUC) was observed in pooled continuous regimen ($-242.8 \log_{10}$ CFUs) than in the cyclical regimen ($-194.7 \log_{10}$ CFUs), indicating that continuous regimen has advantage over the cyclic regimen (**Table 2a**). Both results were statistically significant when compared to pooled placebo ($p < 0.0001$ for both). Similarly, when comparing the three different daily doses, a higher decrease (negative AUC) was observed in Cohort C ($-185.8 \log_{10}$ CFU) as compared to Cohort A ($-122.9 \log_{10}$ CFUs) or B ($-145.8 \log_{10}$ CFUs), indicating that B.I.D. dosing has advantages over O.D. dosing (**Table 2b**). Statistical significance as compared to placebo was reported for all the cohorts (Cohort A: $p = 0.0004$, Cohort B and Cohort C: $p < 0.0001$).

Table 2: a) AUC (log₁₀ CFU) of change from baseline for different treatment cohorts during the treatment epoch

	Continuous TIP (N=44)	Cyclical TIP (N=42)	Pooled PBO (N=21)
n	38	37	21
LS mean (SE)	-230.0 (27.87)	-182.0 (27.72)	12.8 (36.73)
95% CI LS mean	(-285.4, -174.7)	(-237.0, -126.9)	(-60.18, 85.75)
LS mean difference (SE)	-242.8 (44.96)	-194.7 (44.91)	
95% CI LS mean difference	(-332.1, -153.5)	(-284.0, -105.5)	
p-value	<0.0001	<0.0001	

AUC, area under curve; CFU, colony forming unit; CI, confidence interval; LS, least square; PBO, placebo; SE, standard error; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.
LS mean differences and p-value are calculated against pooled PBO

b) AUC (log₁₀ CFU) of change from baseline for different treatment regimens during the treatment epoch

	Cohort A (N=27)	Cohort B (N=29)	Cohort C (N=30)	Pooled PBO (N=21)
n	25	22	28	21
LS mean (SE)	-111.2 (23.58)	-134.1 (24.50)	-174.0 (22.53)	11.7 (25.43)
95% CI LS mean	(-158.03, -64.35)	(-182.74, -85.38)	(-218.79, -129.25)	(-38.77, 62.25)
LS mean difference (SE)	-122.9 (33.63)	-145.8 (34.86)	-185.8 (33.33)	
95% CI LS mean difference	(-189.74, -56.13)	(-215.06, -76.54)	(-251.98, -119.54)	
p-value	0.0004	<0.0001	<0.0001	

AUC, area under curve; CFU, colony forming unit; CI, confidence interval; LS, least square; PBO, placebo; SE, standard error; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.
Cohort A: TIP 3 capsules O.D. (84 mg); Cohort B: TIP 5 capsules O.D. (140 mg); Cohort C: TIP 4 capsules B.I.D. (224 mg).

During the treatment period, several patients had no *P. aeruginosa* detected in their sputum or deep throat cough samples. The proportion of patients with no *P. aeruginosa* detected at two consecutive post-baseline visits was similar in the continuous- and cyclical-TIP groups (23 [52.3%] patients and 21 [50.0%] patients, respectively). Of note, in the placebo group only one [4.8%] patient had no *P. aeruginosa* detected during the course of the study. Moreover, at study completion about one-third of the patients in the active arms remained *P. aeruginosa*-free: continuous TIP 12/31 (38.7%) and cyclical TIP 12/33 (36.4%).

The majority of patients had a baseline isolate with a TIP MIC of ≤ 8 $\mu\text{g/mL}$ (119 [96.7%] patients), indicating that this is a susceptible population. At the end of study, isolates from 11 patients showed four-fold or greater increase in the TIP MIC post-baseline with 10 of them in the active groups (**Supplementary Table 1**). Changes in susceptibility to the tested antibiotics were not relevant, with no particular trends in the emergence of resistance. No particular pattern was noted in the emergence of new bacterial and fungal pathogens observed in the pooled continuous- or cyclical-TIP groups, as they were irregularly found in different active groups.

There was a slightly smaller percentage of patients experiencing pulmonary exacerbation episodes (as defined per protocol) in the pooled continuous TIP group (15 [34.1%]; RR: 0.81, 95% CI 0.39 to 1.68) and pooled cyclical TIP group (15 [35.7%], RR: 0.96, 95% CI 0.49 to 1.91) when compared to placebo (10 [47.6%]). However, the results were not statistically significant (**Figure 3a**).

Similarly, only 38.6% (n=17) and 42.9% (n=18) patients in the pooled continuous and cyclical groups, respectively, used anti-pseudomonal antibiotics during the study, compared with 57.1% (n=12) patients in the placebo group (**Figure 3b**). The reduction in use of anti-pseudomonal antibiotics appears to be significant in the Cohort C continuous TIP group (RR: 0.25, 95% CI 0.07 to 0.98). Of note, anti-pseudomonal antibiotics were used to treat either pulmonary exacerbations or certain respiratory events, which did not reach the protocol-defined criteria for pulmonary exacerbation.

Mean (95% CI) score for QoL-B by Respiratory domain is provided in (**Supplementary Figure 2**). No definite trend was noted across the entire study period in the scores of different QoL-B domains within the active treatment groups, except for the Respiratory Symptoms domain. In the TIP group in Cohort B, LS mean difference *versus* placebo was noted to be 9.6

(95% CI: -3.81 to 22.94, repeated measure analysis), numerically exceeding the published minimum clinically important difference of 8 points [21]; however, with a large variability (as indicated by the large 95% CI). In the same cohort, mean change in scores from baseline until the end of study had similar trends, with improvements for role, emotional and social functioning along with health perceptions, without reaching significance.

Safety

Overall, the study drug was well tolerated with the majority of patients in each cohort achieving >90% compliance at each visit.

The most commonly reported AEs by preferred term were infective exacerbation of BE (37.4%), cough (18.7%) and dyspnoea (17.8%). The majority of infective exacerbations of BE were mild or moderate in nature and only five (4.7%) patients experienced severe infective exacerbations of BE. SAEs were observed in 20.6% (n=22) of the patients, with infective exacerbation of BE being the most common (n=9; 8.4%) followed by haemoptysis and respiratory failure (n=3; 2.8% for each) (**Supplementary Table 2**). No death was reported in this study.

Overall, 92 (86.0%) patients experienced at least one treatment emergent AE (TEAE) regardless of study drug relationship, and the incidence was similar in both the active treatment (pooled continuous- and cyclical-TIP groups) and placebo groups. In total, 45 (42.1%) patients experienced TEAEs suspected to be study-drug related and the most frequent of these were cough (9 [8.4%] patients) and dyspnoea (9 [8.4%] patients). These AEs were variable amongst cohorts. In 25 (23.4%) patients, TEAEs led to study-drug discontinuation and the numbers were higher in the active treatment groups compared with the placebo group. Highest discontinuations were observed in Cohort C (14 [37.8%]) when compared to Cohort A (5 [14.7%]) and Cohort B (6 [16.7%]). The most frequently reported TEAE, leading to study-drug discontinuation across all cohorts by preferred term, was infective exacerbation of BE (5 [4.7%]) (**Table 3**).

Table 3 TEAEs leading to study drug discontinuation by preferred term

		Infective exacerbation of bronchiectasis, n (%)	Glomerular filtration rate decreased, n (%)	Blood creatinine increased, n (%)	Dyspnoea, n (%)	Percentage of patients with at least one TEAE, n (%)
Cohort A 3 capsules O.D. (84 mg)	Continuous TIP (N=14)	2 (14.3)	0	0	0	3 (21.4)
	Cyclical TIP (N=13)	0	0	0	0	1 (7.7)
	Placebo (N=7)	0	0	0	0	1 (14.3)
Cohort B 5 capsules O.D. (140 mg)	Continuous TIP (N=15)	1 (6.7)	1 (6.7)	0	0	3 (20)
	Cyclical TIP (N=14)	0	1 (7.1)	1 (7.1)	1 (7.1)	3 (21.4)
	Placebo (N=7)	0	0	0	0	0
Cohort C 4 capsules B.I.D. (224 mg)	Continuous TIP (N=15)	0	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	2 (13.3)	6 (40)
	Cyclical TIP (N=15)	2 (13.3)	0	0	0	7 (46.7)
	Placebo (N=7)	0	0	0	0	1 (14.3)
Total (N=107)		5 (4.7)	4 (3.7)	3 (2.8)	3 (2.8)	25 (23.4)

B.I.D., twice daily; O.D. once daily; TEAE, treatment-emergent adverse event; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.

With regard to specific AEs of interest, based on the known aminoglycoside safety profile, 5 (4.7%) patients experienced ototoxicity (AE of special interest [AESI]) and 12 (11.2%) patients experienced haemoptysis (one was during the screening epoch). Post-inhalation clinical events were higher in the five capsules O.D. dosing cohort (Cohort B; 9 [25.0%]) followed by the three capsules O.D. dosing cohort (Cohort A; 7 [20.6%]) and subsequently the four capsules B.I.D. dosing cohort (Cohort C; 5 [13.5%]). In addition, no signal of clinically significant bronchial hyperreactivity was observed.

In 12 patients, renal parameter changes were found to be clinically relevant, *i.e.* $\geq 50\%$ increase in serum creatinine and/or estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR) levels ≤ 50 mL/min/1.73 m². Seven of the 12 patients had a plausible association between the renal event and study drug. Of these six patients were treated with pooled continuous TIP (2 were in Cohort B and 4 were in Cohort C), and one with cyclical TIP (Cohort B).

Discussion

This is the first study to evaluate the safety and efficacy of different doses and dosing regimens of TIP in patients with BE and pulmonary *P. aeruginosa* infection. The results demonstrated that all three doses of TIP (84 mg [three capsules] O.D., 140 mg [five capsules] O.D. and 224 mg [four capsules] B.I.D.) significantly reduced the *P. aeruginosa* sputum density from baseline to Day 29 compared with placebo. In addition, higher dose achieved higher reduction in *P. aeruginosa* sputum density. From the *ad-hoc* AUC-based analysis, it was also seen that continuous regimens have advantage over cyclic regimens in reducing *P. aeruginosa* density.

This study demonstrated better reduction in *P. aeruginosa* sputum density compared to CF studies using TIP [22, 23]. In addition, the microbiology results are consistent with previous studies in patients with BE, either with inhaled tobramycin solution [17] or inhaled dual-release ciprofloxacin [24]. Several earlier studies have documented the efficacy of inhaled tobramycin solution in reducing the *P. aeruginosa* sputum density and improving the clinical symptoms of BE [17–19, 25, 26]. However, data from long-term studies are limited in numbers. This study provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of TIP in patients with BE. Patients in the pooled TIP group maintained a high (≥ 2.0) LS mean difference compared with the pooled placebo group at all visits, except for the follow-up visits – a pattern that is similar to previous studies with inhaled antibiotics [27–29]. Further, about half of the patients in the active groups

had no *P. aeruginosa* detected at two consecutive post-baseline visits, with similar frequencies between the continuous- and cyclical-TIP groups (52.3% and 50%, respectively); while only one patient in the placebo group (4.8%) had no *P. aeruginosa* during the study. Moreover, at study completion, about one-third of the patients in the active arms was *P. aeruginosa*-free. Numerical differences were noted for frequency of pulmonary exacerbation episodes and use of anti-pseudomonal antibiotics favouring the TIP treatment groups. However, this study was not powered to demonstrate statistically meaningful differences for clinical outcomes. To do so, larger trials are warranted.

In this study, both continuous- and cyclical-TIP regimens showed effectiveness in reducing the *P. aeruginosa* sputum density (the LS mean difference was higher in the pooled continuous group compared with the cyclical group), the frequency of exacerbations and the use of anti-pseudomonal antibiotics. There was a higher decrease (negative AUC) in the pooled continuous regimen rather than the cyclical regimen. These results are consistent with previous observations suggesting that continuous antibiotic treatment controls the chronic bacterial infection and maintains treatment benefit [30]. A cyclical regimen was historically developed in CF patients with the aim to reduce the risk of the emergence of antibiotic resistance and to lower the cumulative exposure to antibiotics [31, 32]. It can be noted that in this study there was no particular trend towards an increase in TIP resistance in either treatment arm. Further, no clear trend was noted in general in the scores of different QoL-B domains with the active treatment groups.

A phase 2 study showed that BE patients experiencing improvement in their medical condition with inhaled tobramycin had a mean baseline bacterial load of 7.1 (1.4) \log_{10} CFU/g [17]. Treatment benefits in terms of QoL was observed in a 2-month study in BE patients receiving nebulized gentamicin where the median baseline bacterial load was 8.0 (7.6–8.2) \log_{10} CFU/g [30]. Similar results were also noted with inhaled aztreonam where QoL was improved only in patients with high baseline bacterial load [33]. These results are in line with the present study where the mean (SD) sputum density of *P. aeruginosa* was 6.4 (1.8) \log_{10} CFU.

The most frequently observed AEs were infective exacerbation of BE, cough and dyspnoea. SAEs observed were consistent with symptoms associated with pulmonary exacerbation and the

population studied. While the efficacy outcomes tended to be better with higher TIP doses, there was a trend towards an increase in renal laboratory parameters (eGFR and blood creatinine) in this study. Of the 12 patients with plausible association between renal events and study drug, 6 had confounding factors. It was noted that most patients were poly-medicated and had pre-existing conditions (such as diabetes and hypertension). In addition, the exact timings of the renal events were difficult to ascertain as most of these were noted at the time of scheduled monthly clinic visits. Additionally, the advanced age of the study patients could be a predisposing factor. Previous trials with inhaled antibiotics in BE patients did not report renal toxicity; however, they did not use the same stringent renal monitoring criteria as the iBEST study [17–25] and the events noted in this study are in line with the known safety profile of tobramycin. Cases of ototoxicity (mild tinnitus and deafness, moderate labyrinthitis,) noted in this study are consistent with a previous study [28]. Cases of tinnitus and deafness were mild, transient and did not lead to changes in the study medication administration. Also, one case of tinnitus and the case of deafness were reported in patients receiving placebo. As per protocol, audiometry was to be performed for patients with hearing complaints, however this was not performed in these specific patients, therefore the results must be interpreted with caution. Post-inhalation clinical events were short in duration (≤ 30 seconds) and did not demonstrate any dose-response pattern. TEAEs leading to study drug discontinuation were higher in active treatment cohorts with the most number of cases being in the highest dosage group (Cohort C; four capsules B.I.D.). Overall, TIP doses were well tolerated across all treatment groups and a compliance of $>90\%$ was noted. The observed type and rate of adverse respiratory effects with inhaled tobramycin is consistent with previously published studies [17, 19].

Limitations

The study was designed to demonstrate an antibacterial effect of different doses of inhaled tobramycin powder in comparison to placebo and hence was limited in terms of treatment duration and sample size. Enrolment in the trial was stopped before achieving the planned sample size after the acquisition of the product by another company. The study was not powered to demonstrate clinical outcomes such as reduction in exacerbations, use of antibiotics or hospitalisations – these endpoints would require much larger samples sizes and a longer treatment duration of at least one year [13, 34, 35]. The effect on *P. aeruginosa* density in all treated groups suggests that the study was over-powered for the primary outcome measure.

Patients in this study had a high bacterial load at baseline, rendering them more likely to respond to TIP. The consistency of the effect on the reduction in *P. aeruginosa* CFUs across the treated groups increases confidence that this effect is a real effect of tobramycin dry powder inhalation.

Conclusion

Continuous and cyclical treatment with TIP was shown to be efficacious in reducing *P. aeruginosa* sputum density in patients with BE and chronic *P. aeruginosa* infection. All three doses of TIP reduced the *P. aeruginosa* sputum density significantly in a dose-dependent manner. Numerical differences favouring TIP were noted in terms of frequency of pulmonary exacerbation episodes and required use of anti-pseudomonal antibiotics. Overall, TIP was well tolerated with no new safety findings.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Ritika Paul and Nihal Maremanda, Novartis Healthcare Pvt. Ltd, India, for providing medical writing and editorial support to draft the manuscript.

Data sharing statement

Elements of the information presented in this publication are available at clinicaltrials.gov (identifier: NCT02712983) and will be presented at ATS 2020.

Role of the funding source

This work has received support from the European Union/European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking iABC grant agreement n°115721.

The protocol was designed and conducted by Novartis in collaboration with the authors. Novartis was responsible for data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and writing the article. All authors had full access to the entire study data and the corresponding author had the final responsibility for the decision to submit for publication.

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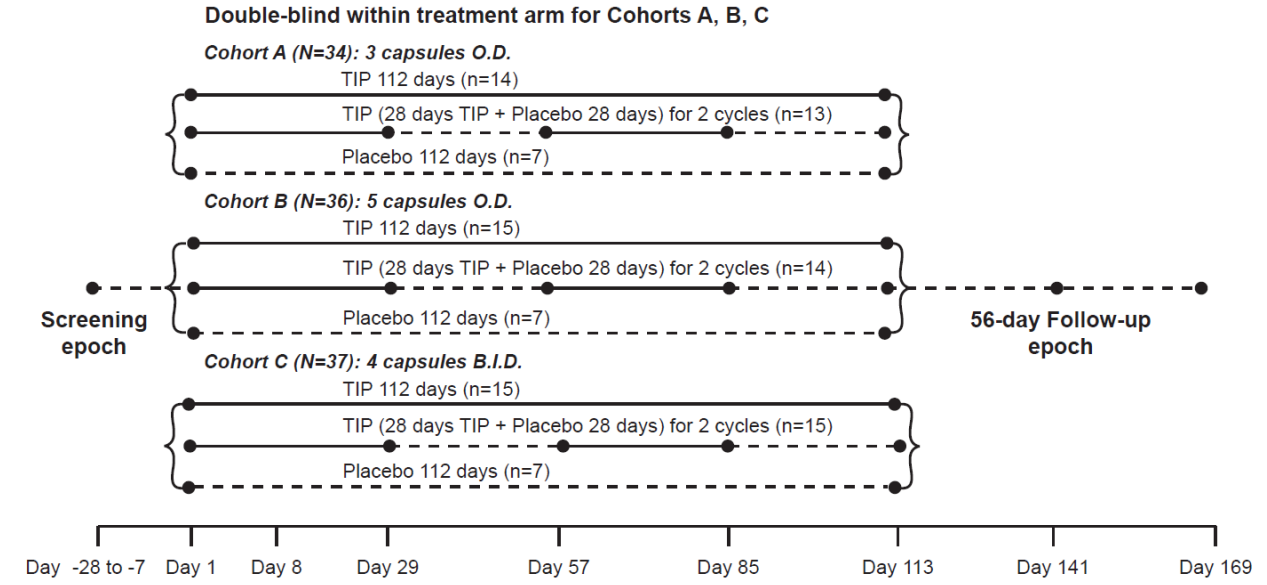
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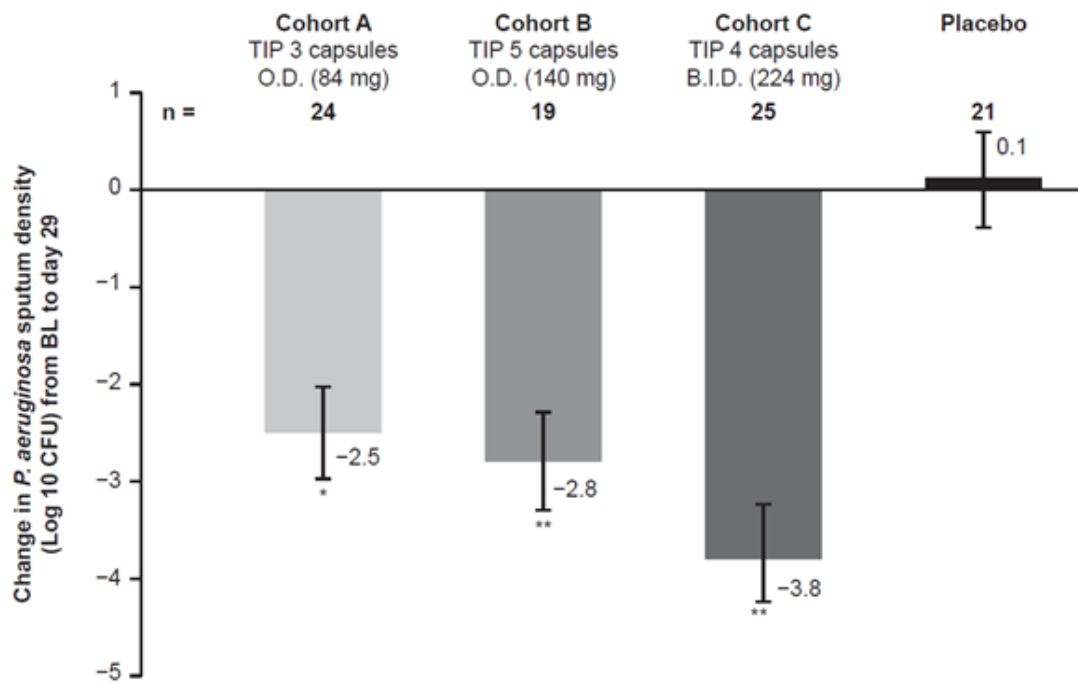
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Figure 1. Study design (adapted from Loebinger MR et al., 2019 [20])



B.I.D., twice daily; n, number of patients; O.D., once daily; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.

Figure 2. Change in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* sputum density from baseline to Day 29 for the treatment and placebo groups



B.I.D., twice daily; BL, baseline; CFU, colony-forming unit; n, number of patients; O.D., once daily; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.

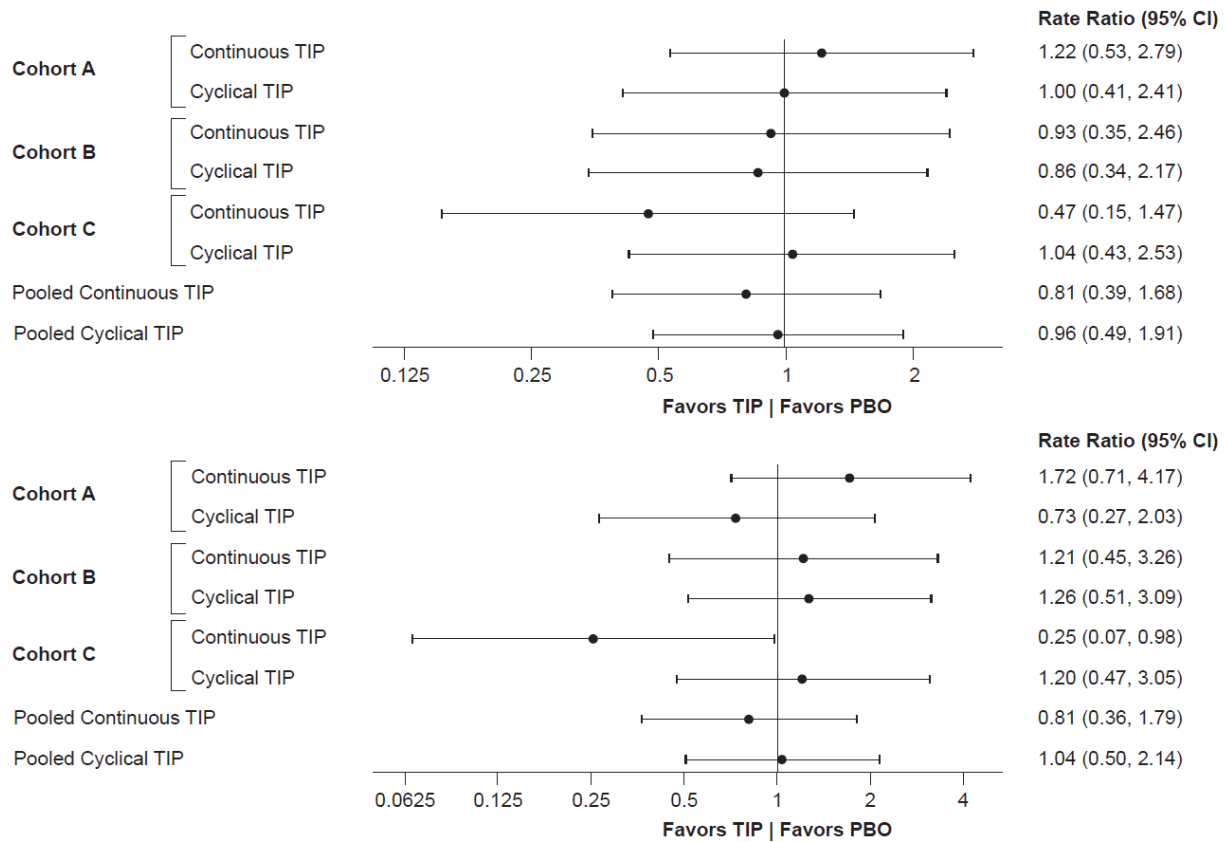
*p=0.0001, **p<0.0001, *versus* placebo.

p-values for each treatment cohort are in comparison to the pooled placebo group.

Figure 3.

a) Forest plots showing the effect of different doses of TIP as compared to pooled PBO and different regimens on frequency of pulmonary exacerbation

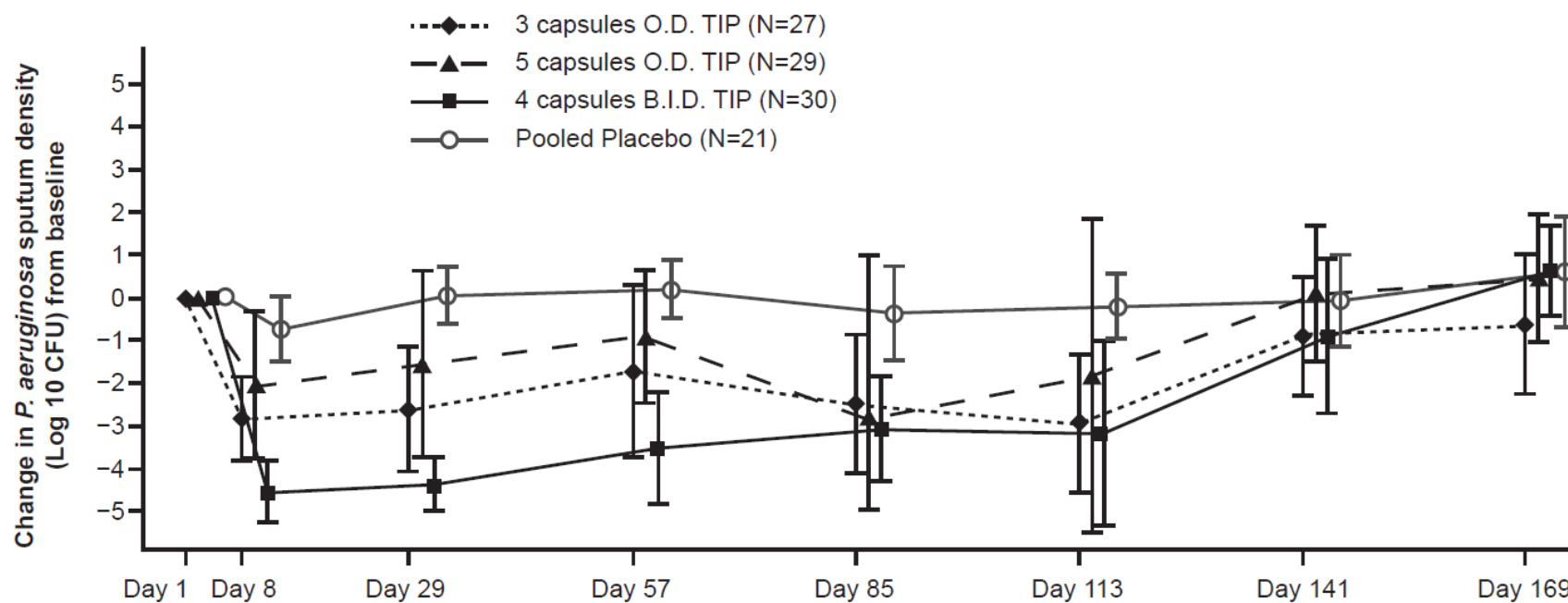
b) Usage pattern of anti-pseudomonal antibiotics with different TIP doses as compared to pooled PBO and different treatment regimens



CI, confidence interval; PBO, placebo; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.

Cohort A: TIP 3 capsules O.D. (84 mg); Cohort B: TIP 5 capsules O.D. (140 mg); Cohort C: TIP 4 capsules B.I.D. (224 mg).

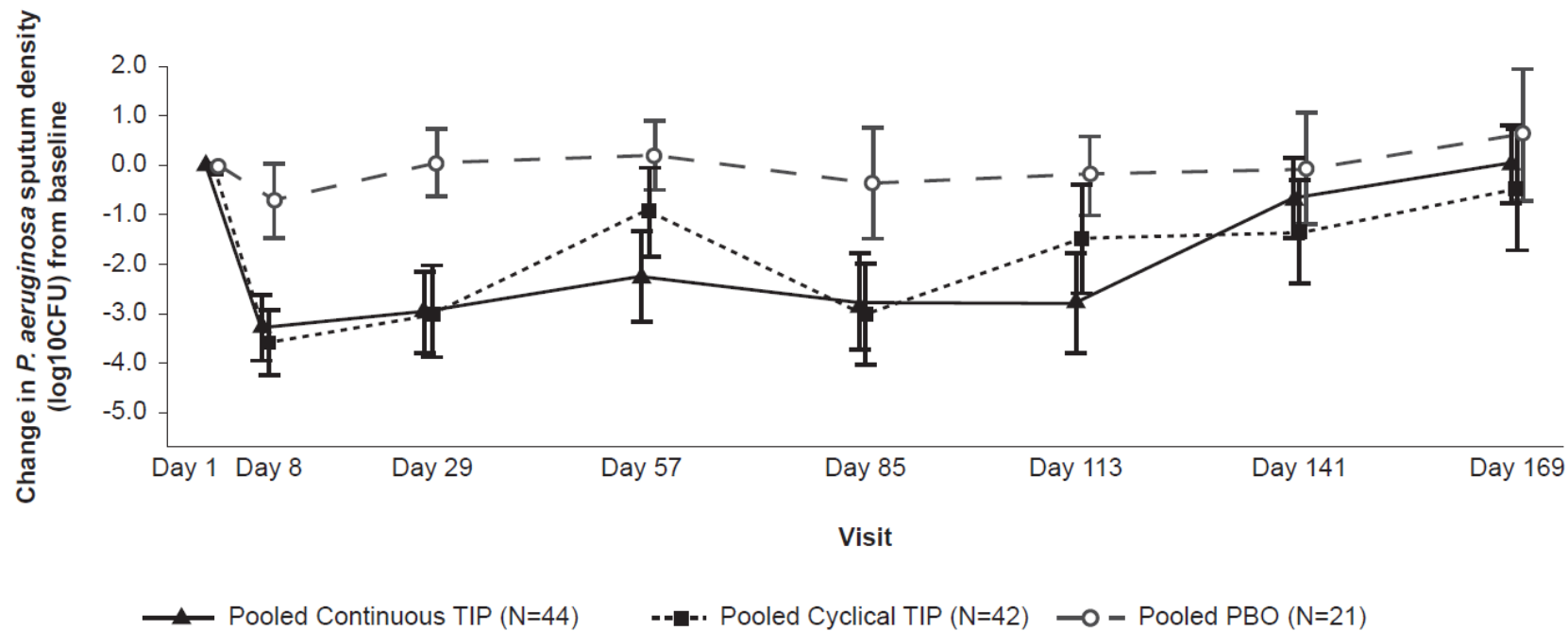
Supplementary Figure 1a: Antimicrobial efficacy of TIP over the entire study duration: dose-response effect



B.I.D., twice daily; CFU, colony-forming unit; O.D., once daily; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.

For each dose, continuous- and cyclical-TIP regimen have been pooled.

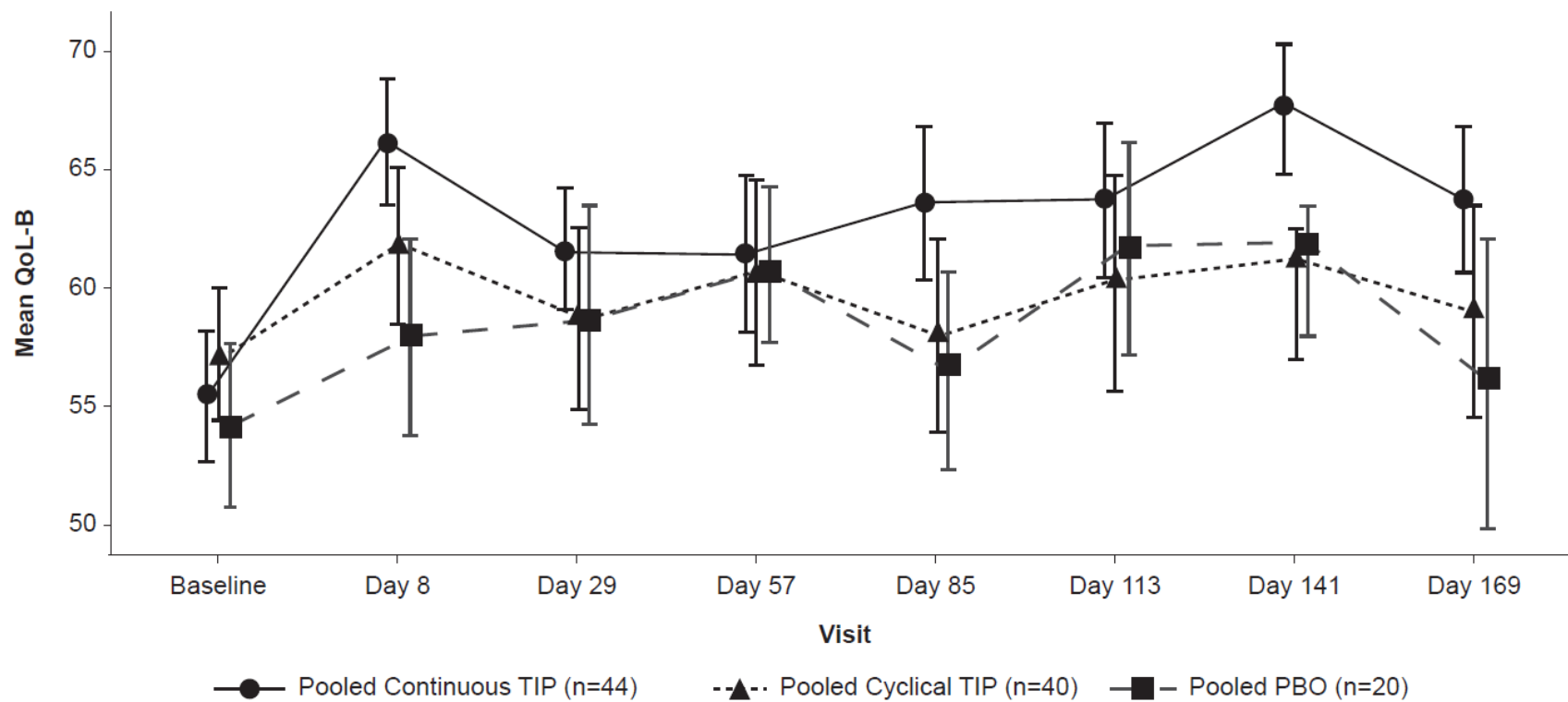
Supplementary Figure 1b: Antimicrobial efficacy of continuous- and cyclical-TIP regimens over the entire study duration



CFU, colony-forming unit; PBO, placebo; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder

Different daily doses of Cohort A, B and C of TIP were pooled by either continuous or cyclical regimen

Supplementary Figure 2: Mean (SE) for QoL-B by respiratory symptoms domain*



B.I.D., twice daily; O.D., once daily; QoL-B, quality of life questionnaire for bronchiectasis; SE, standard error; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.
*Calculated for patients with overall study drug compliance $\geq 80\%$

Supplemental Table 1. Change in tobramycin MIC from susceptible ($\leq 4 \mu\text{g/mL}$) to non-susceptible ($\geq 16 \mu\text{g/mL}$): post-baseline change

		n (%)
Cohort A 3 capsules O.D. (84 mg)	Continuous TIP (N=14)	1 (7.1%)
	Cyclical TIP (N=13)	3 (23.1%)
	Placebo (N=7)	0
Cohort B 5 capsules O.D. (140 mg)	Continuous TIP (N=15)	1 (6.7%)
	Cyclical TIP (N=14)	2 (14.3%)
	Placebo (N=7)	1 (14.3%)
Cohort C 4 capsules B.I.D. (224 mg)	Continuous TIP (N=15)	2 (13.3%)
	Cyclical TIP (N=15)	1 (6.7%)
	Placebo (N=7)	0
Total (N=107)		11 (10.3%)

B.I.D., twice a day, MIC, minimum inhibitory concentration, OD, once daily; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.

Supplementary Table 2. Serious adverse events by preferred term

Preferred term	Cohort A: 3 capsules O.D.			Cohort B: 5 capsules O.D.			Cohort C: 4 capsules B.I.D.			Total (n=107) n (%)
	TIP (n=14) n (%)	TIP/PBO (n=13) n (%)	PBO (n=7) n (%)	TIP (n=15) n (%)	TIP/PBO (n=14) n (%)	PBO (n=7) n (%)	TIP (n=15) n (%)	TIP/PBO (n=15) n (%)	PBO (n=7) n (%)	
Patients with at least one serious adverse event	4 (28.6)	2 (15.4)	0	4 (26.7)	3 (21.4)	2 (28.6)	2 (13.3)	4 (26.7)	1 (14.3)	22 (20.6)
Infective exacerbation of bronchiectasis	3 (21.4)	0	0	2 (13.3)	1 (7.1)	0	0	3 (20.0)	0	9 (8.4)
Haemoptysis	1 (7.1)	0	0	0	1 (7.1)	1 (14.3)	0	0	0	3 (2.8)
Respiratory failure	1 (7.1)	0	0	0	1 (7.1)	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	3 (2.8)
Dyspnoea	0	0	0	0	1 (7.1)	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	2 (1.9)
Acute myocardial infarction	0	0	0	0	1 (7.1)	0	0	0	0	1 (0.9)
Asthenia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	1 (0.9)
Atrial fibrillation	0	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (0.9)
Bacterial disease carrier	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	1 (0.9)
Bile duct stone	0	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (0.9)
Blood creatinine abnormal	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	1 (0.9)
Cholecystitis acute	0	1 (7.7)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (0.9)
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	1 (0.9)
Glomerular filtration rate decreased	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	1 (0.9)
Intestinal obstruction	0	0	0	0	0	1 (14.3)	0	0	0	1 (0.9)
Orthostatic hypotension	0	0	0	1 (6.7)	0	0	0	0	0	1 (0.9)
Pneumonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (14.3)	1 (0.9)
Syncope	0	1 (7.7)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (0.9)

B.I.D., twice daily; n, number of patients; O.D., once daily; PBO, placebo; TIP, tobramycin inhalation powder.