Wakix® (pitolisant) – New orphan drug approval

- August 15, 2019, Harmony Biosciences announced the FDA approval of Wakix (pitolisant), for the treatment of excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) in adult patients with narcolepsy.

- Wakix is a first-in-class, selective histamine 3 receptor antagonist/inverse agonist that works through a novel mechanism of action to increase the synthesis and release of histamine, a wake-promoting neurotransmitter in the brain.

- The efficacy of Wakix was established in two, double-blind studies in 261 adult patients with narcolepsy. Patients were randomized to receive Wakix, placebo, or active control. The primary endpoint was the change in the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) score vs. placebo. The ESS is an 8-item questionnaire by which patients rate their perceived likelihood of falling asleep during usual daily life activities; the maximum score is 24.

    — In both studies, Wakix demonstrated a statistically significantly greater improvement in the least square mean final ESS score vs. placebo. The placebo-subtracted difference at week 8 was -3.1 (95% CI: -5.73, -0.46) and -2.2 (95% CI: -4.17, -0.22) for study 1 and study 2, respectively.

- Wakix is contraindicated in patients with severe hepatic impairment.

- A warning and precaution for Wakix is QT prolongation.

- The most common adverse reactions (≥ 5% and twice placebo) with Wakix use were insomnia, nausea, and anxiety.

- The recommended dosage range for Wakix is 17.8 mg to 35.6 mg administered orally once daily in the morning upon wakening. The dosage should be titrated as follows:

    — Week 1: Initiate with a dosage of 8.9 mg (two 4.45 mg tablets) once daily
    — Week 2: Increase dosage to 17.8 mg (one 17.8 mg tablet) once daily
    — Week 3: May increase to the maximum recommended dosage of 35.6 mg (two 17.8 mg tablets) once daily.

- Harmony Biosciences plans to launch Wakix in the fourth quarter of 2019. Wakix will be available as 4.45 mg and 17.8 mg tablets.