Clinical and Patient-Reported Outcomes in a Phase 3, Randomized, Open-Label Study Evaluating Axicabtagene Ciloleucel Versus Standard-of-Care Therapy in Elderly Patients With Relapsed/Refractory Large B-cell Lymphoma (ZUMA-7)

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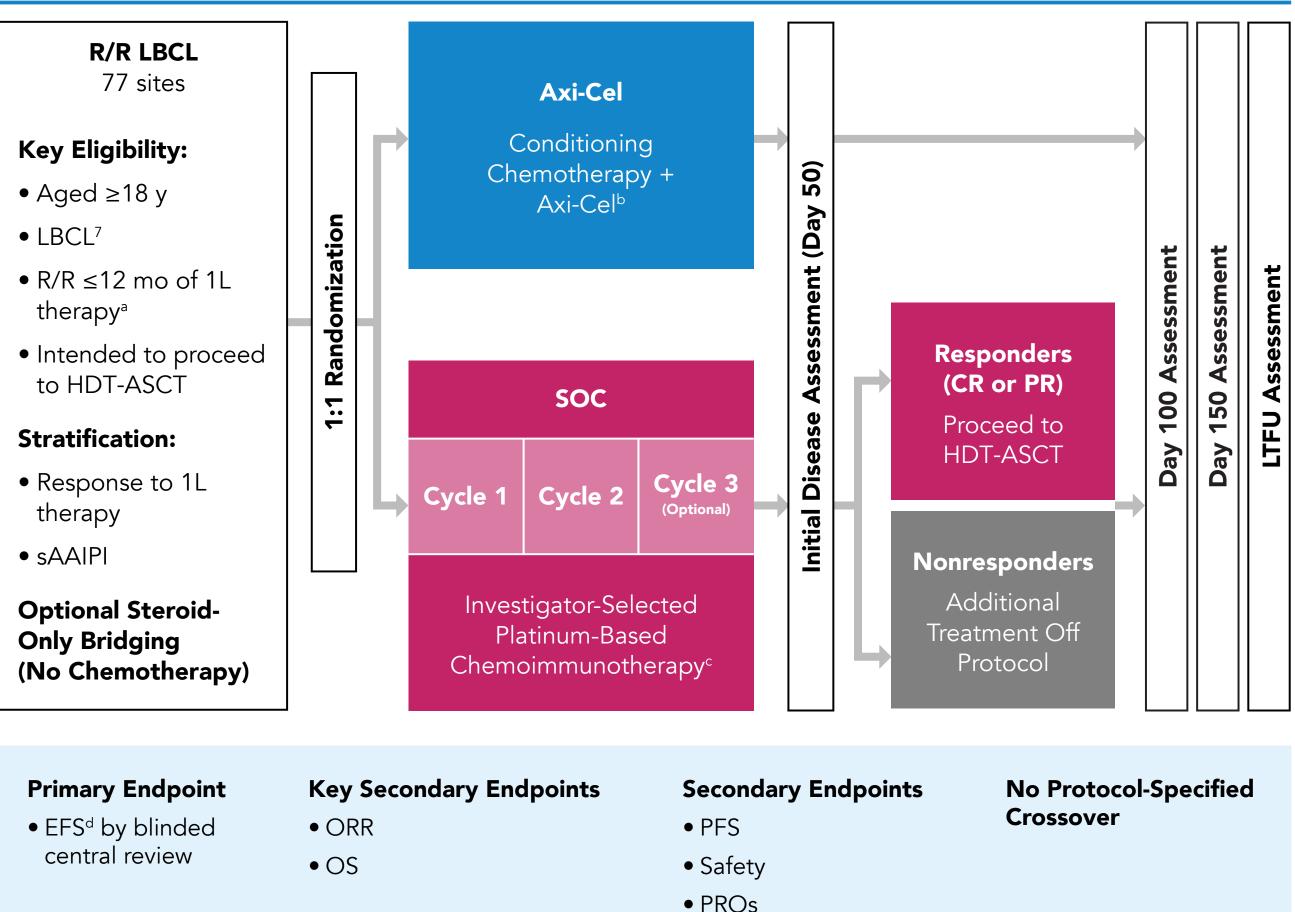
BACKGROUND

- Axicabtagene ciloleucel (axi-cel) is an autologous anti-CD19 chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy approved for the treatment of adult patients with relapsed/refractory (R/R) large B-cell lymphoma (LBCL) after ≥2 lines of systemic therapy and most recently, in the United States, for R/R LBCL within 12 months of first-line chemoimmunotherapy[1]
- The median age at LBCL diagnosis is 66 years, and age can be a determining factor in the decision to use curative therapy[2,3]
- Older patients with R/R LBCL are at risk of inferior outcomes, increased toxicity, and inability to tolerate second-line standard-of-care (SOC) treatment[3]
- In addition, second-line SOC is often associated with poor health-related quality of life (QoL)[4,5]
- ZUMA-7 (NCT03391466) is the first randomized, global, multicenter Phase 3 study of axi-cel versus SOC as second-line treatment in patients with R/R LBCL
- In ZUMA-7, axi-cel significantly improved event-free survival (EFS) compared with second-line SOC (hazard ratio [HR], 0.398; P<.0001; median 8.3 versus 2 months, respectively; 24-month EFS rate: 41% versus 16%, respectively; 24.9-month median follow-up)[6]

OBJECTIVE

- To present the safety, efficacy, and patient-reported outcome (PRO) results in a preplanned subgroup analysis of ZUMA-7 patients aged ≥65 years

METHODS

Figure 1. ZUMA-7 Study Schema and Endpoints

- Disease assessments by positron emission tomography and computed tomography scan per Lugano Classification[8] occurred at specified time points from randomization (Figure 1)
- Primary endpoint was EFS, defined as time from randomization to the earliest date of disease progression, commencement of new lymphoma therapy, or death from any cause
- Key secondary endpoints included objective response rate (ORR) and overall survival (OS)
- Secondary endpoints included progression-free survival (PFS), safety, and PROs
- Statistical analysis of the preplanned subgroup was similar to the primary analysis
- Multivariate analyses were conducted to examine efficacy in treatment with axi-cel compared with SOC after adjusting for multiple covariates (treatment, gender, disease type, molecular subgroup, lactate dehydrogenase, tumor burden, and age)
- All reported P values are descriptive

RESULTS

Figure 2. Disposition of Patients Aged ≥65 Years in ZUMA-7

- A total of 359 patients were enrolled in ZUMA-7 (N=180 and N=179 for axi-cel and SOC arms, respectively)
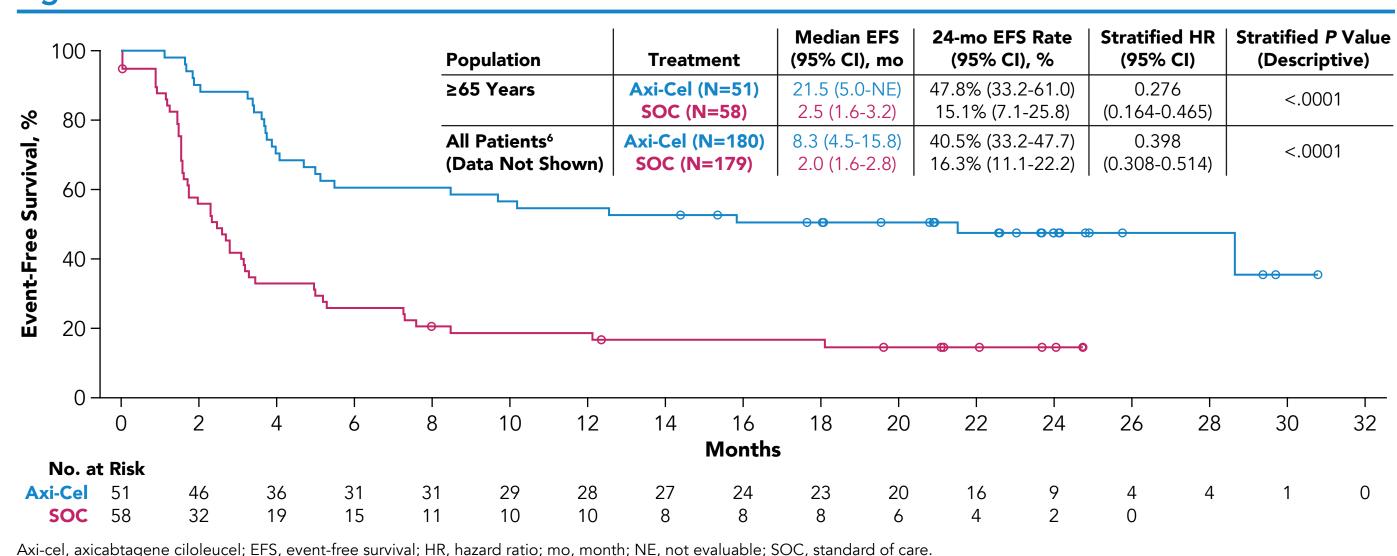 - The subgroup analysis of patients aged ≥65 years included 109 patients (N=51 and N=58 for axi-cel and SOC arms, respectively; Figure 2)
- While 49/51 (96%) patients received axi-cel, only 20/58 (34%) received high-dose chemoimmunotherapy and autologous stem cell transplantation (HDT-ASCT)
- Axi-cel was successfully manufactured for all patients who underwent leukapheresis

Table 1. Baseline Characteristics for Patients Aged ≥65 Years

Characteristic	Axi-Cel N=51	SOC N=58	Overall N=109
Median age (range), years	70 (65-80)	69 (65-81)	69 (65-81)
Sex, male, n (%)	28 (55)	39 (67)	67 (61)
Disease stage III-IV, n (%)	42 (82)	44 (76)	86 (79)
sAAIPI of 2-3[a], n (%)	27 (53)	18 (31)	45 (41)
Response to 1L therapy[a], n (%)			
Primary refractory	37 (73)	39 (67)	76 (70)
Relapse ≤12 months of 1L therapy	14 (27)	19 (33)	33 (30)
Disease type per investigator, n (%)			
DLBCL not specified	27 (53)	40 (69)	67 (61)
T-cell/histiocyte-rich LBCL	0 (0)	1 (2)	1 (1)
Large cell transformation from follicular lymphoma	7 (14)	9 (16)	16 (15)
HGBL with/without MYC and BCL2 and/or BCL6 rearrangement	17 (33)	8 (14)	25 (23)
Elevated LDH level[b]	31 (61)	24 (41)	55 (50)

[a] As reported by investigator at the time of randomization via Interactive Voice/Web Response System. [b] LDH level greater than upper limit of normal per local laboratory reference range.
Axi-cel, axicabtagene ciloleucel; DLBCL, diffuse large B-cell lymphoma; HGBL, high grade B-cell lymphoma; LBCL, large B-cell lymphoma; LDH, lactate dehydrogenase; sAAIPI, second-line age-adjusted International Prognostic Index; SOC, standard of care.

- Compared with SOC patients, more axi-cel patients had high-risk features at baseline, including second-line age-adjusted International Prognostic Index 2-3 (53% vs 31%), elevated lactate dehydrogenase (61% vs 41%), and high-grade B-cell lymphoma (including double-/triple-hit lymphoma; 33% vs 14%; Table 1)

Figure 3. Primary Endpoint: Event-Free Survival Per Blinded Central Review in Patients Aged ≥65 Years

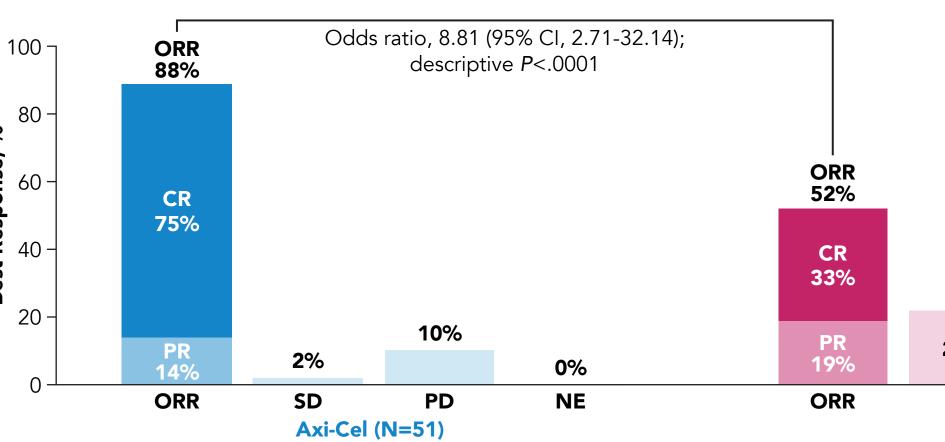| Population ≥65 Years	Treatment	Median EFS (95% CI), mo	24-mo EFS Rate (95% CI), %	Stratified HR (95% CI)	Stratified P Value (Descriptive)
≥65 Years	Axi-Cel (N=51)	21.5 (5.0-NE)	47.8% (33.2-61.0)	0.276	<.0001
	SOC (N=58)	2.5 (1.6-3.2)	15.1% (7.1-25.8)	(0.164-0.465)	
All Patients[a] (Data Not Shown)	Axi-Cel (N=180)	8.3 (4.5-15.8)	40.5% (33.2-47.7)	0.398	<.0001
	SOC (N=179)	2.0 (1.6-2.8)	16.3% (11.1-22.2)	(0.308-0.514)	

- The primary endpoint of EFS showed that treatment with axi-cel was superior to SOC (HR, 0.276; descriptive P<.0001; Figure 3)
- With 24.3-months median follow-up, median EFS was longer with axi-cel versus SOC (21.5 months [95% CI, 5.0-not evaluable] vs 2.5 months [95% CI, 1.6-3.2], respectively) in patients aged 65 years or older
- Kaplan-Meier estimates of the 24-month EFS rates were higher for axi-cel than for SOC (47.8% vs 15.1%, respectively)
- Multivariate analyses showed similar EFS results when adjusting for differences in baseline characteristics (HR, 0.23; descriptive P<.0001)

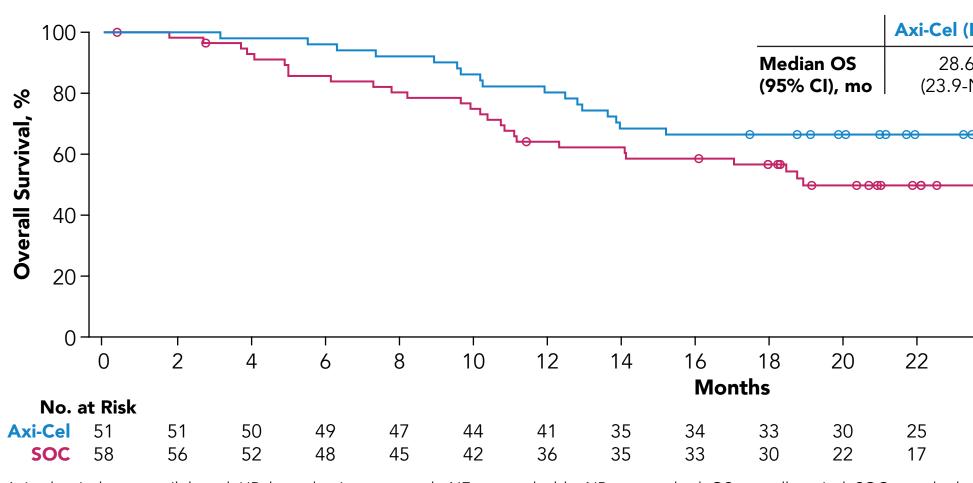### Figure 4. Objective Response Rate in Patients Aged ≥65 Years

- ORR was higher with axi-cel versus SOC (descriptive P<.0001), and complete response (CR) rate of the axi-cel arm was over double that of the SOC arm (75% vs 33%, respectively; Figure 4)

Figure 5. Overall Survival in Patients Aged ≥65 Years, Evaluated as an Interim Analysis

	Axi-Cel (N=51)	SOC (N=58)	Stratified HR (95% CI)
Median OS (95% CI), mo	28.6 (23.9-NE)	NR (12.3-NE)	0.517 (0.277-0.964)

- 57% of SOC patients received subsequent cellular immunotherapy (off protocol)
- OS, evaluated as a preplanned interim analysis, was prolonged in the axi-cel compared with the SOC arm (HR, 0.517; 95% CI, 0.277-0.964; descriptive P=.0175; Figure 5)
- The Kaplan-Meier estimate of OS at 2 years was 64% in the axi-cel and 51% in the SOC arm
- Preplanned sensitivity analysis suggested an OS benefit in favor of axi-cel with the Rank Preserving Structural Failure Time model[7] (HR, 0.364; 95% CI, 0.183-0.723)
- Median PFS was 21.5 months (95% CI, 5.1-NE) for the axi-cel arm and 5.0 months (95% CI, 2.8-7.3) for the SOC arm (HR, 0.384; 95% CI, 0.214-0.691; descriptive P<.001)

Table 2. Safety Overview in Patients Aged ≥65 Years

	Axi-Cel N=49		SOC N=55	
	Any Grade	Grade ≥3	Any Grade	Grade ≥3
Any AE, n (%)[a,b]	49 (100)	46 (94)	55 (100)	45 (82)
Pyrexia	47 (96)	4 (8)	14 (25)	0 (0)
Neutropenia[c]	39 (80)	39 (80)	24 (44)	24 (44)
Nausea	23 (47)	1 (2)	37 (67)	3 (5)
Any serious AE, n (%)[d]	29 (59)	25 (51)	26 (47)	23 (42)
CRS, n (%)[e,f]	48 (98)	4 (8)	-	-
CRS management,[g] n (%)				
Tocilizumab	33 (67)		-	
Corticosteroids	14 (29)		-	
Vasopressors	3 (6)		-	
Median time to onset, days	3		-	
Median duration of events, days	8		-	
Neurologic event, n (%)[b,i]	32 (65)	13 (27)	14 (25)	1 (2)
Management with corticosteroids,[g] n (%)	22 (45)		0 (0)	
Median time to onset, days	7		26	
Median duration of events, days	9		39	
Reason for deaths, n (%)				
Progressive disease	19 (39)		20 (36)	
Grade 5 AEs during protocol-specified reporting period	1 (2)[i]		1 (2)[k]	
Definitive therapy-related mortality	0 (0)		1 (2)	
Other[i]	1 (2)		5 (9)	

[a] Included are the 3 most common AEs of any grade occurring in the axi-cel arm. [b] In patients aged <65 years, Grade ≥3 AEs occurred in 109 (90%) axi-cel patients and 95 (84%) SOC patients. [c] Neutropenia refers to the combined preferred terms of neutropenia and neutrophil count decreased. [d] In patients aged <65 years, Grade ≥3 serious AEs occurred in 47 (39%) axi-cel patients and 44 (39%) SOC patients. [e] CRS was graded according to Lee et al.[10] [f] In patients aged <65 years, Grade ≥3 CRS occurred in 7 (6%) axi-cel patients. [g] Toxicity management followed ZUMA-1 pivotal cohorts. [h] Neurologic events were identified per prespecified search list based on methods used in the blinatumomab registrational study.[11] In patients <65 years, Grade ≥3 neurologic events occurred in 23 (19%) axi-cel patients and 0 (0%) SOC patients. [i] Due to COVID-19. [j] Due to cardiac arrest. [k] Other reasons for death included natural progression from prior subdural hematoma (n=1) in the axi-cel arm and COVID-19 (n=2), cardiopulmonary arrest (n=1), urosepsis (n=1), and sepsis (n=1) in the SOC arm. AE, adverse event; axi-cel, axicabtagene ciloleucel; CRS, cytokine release syndrome; SOC, standard of care.

- Grade ≥3 adverse events (AEs) occurred in 46/49 (94%) axi-cel patients and 45/55 (82%) SOC patients (Table 2)
- Grade 5 treatment-related AEs occurred in 0 and 1 (cardiac arrest) patient in the axi-cel and SOC arms, respectively
- There were slightly higher rates of cytokine release syndrome (CRS) and neurologic events, including Grade ≥3, in patients aged ≥65 years compared with the overall ZUMA-7 population[6]
  - CRS occurred in 98% and 8% for any grade and Grade ≥3, respectively, in patients ≥65 years of age compared with 92% and 6% in the overall ZUMA-7 population
  - In the axi-cel arm, neurologic events occurred in 65% and 27% for any grade and Grade ≥3, respectively, in patients ≥65 years of age compared with 60% and 21% in the overall ZUMA-7 population

Figure 6. Change From Baseline for Prespecified PRO Endpoints in Patients Aged ≥65 Years

*P<.05.
Axi-cel, axicabtagene ciloleucel; EORTC, European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer; EQ-5D-5L, EuroQoL five-dimension questionnaire using a five-level scale; PRO, patient-reported outcome; QLQ-C30, Quality of Life Questionnaire-Core 30; SOC, standard of care; VAS, visual analogue scale.

- In the QoL analysis set comprising 46 axi-cel and 42 SOC patients, there was a clinically meaningful difference in mean change of scores from baseline at Day 100 in favor of axi-cel for European Organization for Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC) Quality of Life Questionnaire-Core 30 (QLQ-C30) Global Health (P<.0001), Physical Functioning (P=.0019), and EuroQoL five-dimension questionnaire using a five-level scale (EQ-5D-5L) visual analogue scale (P<.0001; Figure 6)
  - For all 3 domains, scores favored (P<.05) axi-cel over SOC at Day 150
- The mean estimated scores numerically returned to or exceeded baseline scores earlier in the axi-cel arm (by Day 150) but never equaled or exceeded baseline scores by Month 15 in the SOC arm
- Additional PRO domains with mean change of scores from baseline to Day 100 in favor of axi-cel were EORTC QLQ-C30 Role Functioning, EORTC QLQ-C30 Emotional Functioning, EORTC QLQ-C30 Social Functioning, EORTC QLQ-C30 Fatigue, EORTC QLQ-C30 Dyspnea, EORTC QLQ-C30 Appetite Loss, EORTC QLQ-C30 Diarrhea, and EQ-5D-5L Index

CONCLUSIONS

- Axi-cel demonstrated superiority over second-line SOC (HDT-ASCT) in patients ≥65 years, despite the greater frequency of high-risk features in the axi-cel arm, with
  - >8-fold greater median EFS (21.5 months vs 2.5 months, respectively; descriptive P<.0001)
  - >3-fold greater estimated 24-month EFS rate
  - Over double the CR rate
  - Almost triple the proportion of patients receiving definitive therapy
- Axi-cel had a manageable safety profile that was consistent with previous studies and real-world data in patients of all ages[12,13]
- Compared with SOC, axi-cel also showed meaningful improvement in QoL, measured by multiple validated PRO instruments, with suggested faster recovery to pretreatment QoL
- These data demonstrate that older patients, who are frequently considered transplant-ineligible based on age, can safely receive second-line curative intent therapy
- The superior clinical outcomes and patient experience with axi-cel over SOC should help inform treatment choices in second-line R/R LBCL for patients 65 years of age or older

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DISCLOSURES