

# Safety and Immunogenicity of MAGE-A3 Cancer Immunotherapeutic with or without Adjuvant Chemotherapy in Patients with Resected Stage IB to III MAGE-A3-Positive Non–Small-Cell Lung Cancer

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**Introduction:** To assess the safety and immunogenicity of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic in patients with stage IB–III MAGE-A3-positive non–small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) who were or were not undergoing standard cisplatin/vinorelbine chemotherapy.

**Methods:** This open, prospective, multicenter, parallel-group phase I study (NCT00455572) enrolled patients with resected (cohorts 1–3) or unresectable (cohort 4) MAGE-A3-positive NSCLC. MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic (300 µg recombinant MAGE-A3 formulated with AS15) was administered (eight doses, 3 weeks apart) concurrent with (cohort 1), after (cohort 2), or without (cohort 3) standard-adjuvant chemotherapy, or after standard radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy (cohort 4).

**Results:** Sixty-seven patients received greater than or equal to 1 dose of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic. Grade 3/4 adverse events (AEs) were reported for 16 out of 19 (84%), 2 out of 18 (11%), 5 out of 18 (28%), and 1 out of 12 (8%) patients in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. Many grade 3/4 AEs in cohort 1 (e.g., neutropenia) were typical of chemotherapy. Six patients, including three in cohort 1, reported study treatment–related grade 3/4 AEs (injection-site reactions or musculoskeletal/back pain, which resolved within 5 days). One patient (in cohort 4) died, but this and the other serious adverse events were not study treatment related. MAGE-A3-specific antibody responses to immunotherapy were induced in all patients evaluated in all cohorts. MAGE-A3-specific CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses

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the publication. All authors completed the ICMJE Form for Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest and declared that the following interests are relevant to the submitted work. Dr. Debois, Dr. Jarnjak, Dr. de Sousa Alves, Dr. Louahed, Dr. Brichard, and Dr. Lehmann were employees of GSK group of companies at the time of the study. Dr. Jarnjak, Dr. de Sousa Alves, Dr. Louahed, Dr. Brichard, and Dr. Lehmann report ownership of GSK stock. Dr. Vansteenkiste reports his institution (KUL, Leuven, Belgium) receiving payments from GSK for consultancy. Dr. Reck reports receiving payments from AstraZeneca, Boehringer-Ingelheim, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Hoffman-La-Roche, Lilly, MSD, Novartis, and Pfizer for consultancy or lectures. Dr. Douillard reports being a board member at GSK, AstraZeneca, and Boehringer-Ingelheim, reports receiving payments from GSK for travel and other study-related purposes, and for consultancy, and reports receiving payments from AstraZeneca and Boehringer-Ingelheim for lectures and consultancy. Dr. Fasola reports being a board member at Amgen and reports receiving payments from GSK, AstraZeneca, and Novartis for lectures. Dr. Potter reports receiving payments from GSK for consultancy. Dr. Taylor reports receiving payments from GSK for travel related to the study. Dr. Bosquée reports his institution (ULB, Brussels, Belgium) receiving payments from GSK for consultancy. Dr. Pujol, Dr. De Pas, Dr. Atanackovic, Dr. Thomeer, and Dr. Scheubel report no conflicts of interest.

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to immunotherapy were detected in 4 out of 11 (36%), 4 out of 15 (27%), 2 out of 8 (25%), and 5 out of 6 (83%) evaluated patients in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively; and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses were only detected in four patients.

**Conclusion:** In resected and unresectable NSCLC patients and irrespective of whether standard chemotherapy was concurrent or not, MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic is well tolerated and induces MAGE-A3-specific immune responses.

**Key Words:** Adjuvant chemotherapy, Immunotherapy, Immunostimulant, MAGE-A3, Non-small cell lung carcinoma, Vaccine

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Non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) represents approximately 85% of all lung cancer cases.<sup>1,2</sup> Complete resection is the mainstay of treatment for early (stage I and II) and some locally advanced (stage IIIA) NSCLC. The major limitation remains recurrence of disease, with 5-year survival ranging between 73% (stage IA) and 24% (stage IIIA).<sup>3</sup>

Chemotherapy with cisplatin (CDDP)-based doublets is the standard treatment after surgery for stage IIA–IIIA NSCLC with an absolute 5-year survival benefit of 5.4%.<sup>4,5</sup> The absolute 5-year survival benefit for CDDP and vinorelbine (VNR) chemotherapy has been estimated at greater than or equal to 8.6%.<sup>6,7</sup> However, the lung adjuvant cisplatin evaluation (LACE) meta-analysis did not identify a survival benefit for CDDP-based adjuvant chemotherapy in stage IB disease,<sup>5</sup> although a survival benefit was suggested for patients with large tumors in the CALGB9633 study.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the efficacy of adjuvant chemotherapy remains limited and only for selected patients. For unresectable stage III NSCLC, platinum-based chemotherapy combined with thoracic radiotherapy remains a recommended treatment and provides marginal 5-year survival benefit over radiotherapy alone.<sup>9–11</sup> Therefore, even with these advances, new approaches are required to improve the prognosis for NSCLC patients.

Cancer immunotherapy represents a different approach and encompasses a broad range of strategies to induce or boost immune-mediated tumor-cell destruction (active immunotherapy), or to counteract mechanisms by which tumor cells evade or suppress immune-mediated destruction (passive immunotherapy).<sup>12–16</sup> Several different strategies have entered late-stage clinical development,<sup>12,16,17</sup> including active immunotherapies<sup>18–23</sup> and immune-checkpoint inhibitors.<sup>24–26</sup> Immune-checkpoint inhibitors include the anticytotoxic T lymphocyte-associated antigen (CTLA-4), and programmed death receptor-1 (PD-1), and anti-PD-L1 compounds. These compounds target tumor-mediated inhibition of cytotoxic T-cell activity; preliminary evidence for these compounds being administered as monotherapies or in combination with chemotherapy or targeted agents has revealed promising activity with manageable toxicity.<sup>27,28</sup>

MAGE-A3 cancer immunotherapeutic is an active immunotherapy that has been evaluated in NSCLC and melanoma patients.<sup>29–32</sup> It contains recombinant full-length MAGE-A3 protein formulated with the immunostimulant AS15. MAGE-A3 is a cancer/testis antigen<sup>33</sup> and is considered to be tumor-specific because the only normal cells (spermatogonia and trophoblasts) in which it is expressed are unable to

present MAGE-A3 epitopes because of the absence of class I and II human leukocyte antigens.<sup>34–38</sup> MAGE-A3 expression has been identified in 24% to 45% of NSCLCs (stages I–IV) and seems relatively more prevalent in squamous cell carcinomas than in other histological types.<sup>36,39,40</sup>

The intention of combining active immunotherapy with radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy would be to provide additive or synergistic clinical benefits without jeopardizing schedule and dosage of standard chemotherapies or radiotherapies. Moreover, the earlier administration of active immunotherapy, that is, concurrent with rather than after chemotherapy, would permit the earlier development of an immune response. Theoretically, chemotherapy or radiotherapy may increase the susceptibility of residual tumor cells to immune-mediated attack by inhibiting regulatory-T cells or by invoking stress or immunogenic cell death responses in the same tumor cells and resulting in the exposure/release of tumor-associated antigens and the potential for tumor-antigen spreading.<sup>41–45</sup> Conversely, chemotherapy, and corticosteroids often used concurrently as antiemetics, may detrimentally affect the response to active immunotherapy through their potentially immunosuppressive side-effects.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the objective of this phase I study was to evaluate, in patients with MAGE A3-positive NSCLC, the safety and immunogenicity (MAGE-A3-specific T-cell and antibody responses) of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic in different treatment settings that do or do not include chemotherapy. Two of the four treatment settings were also evaluated in the concurrently performed MAGE-A3 as Adjuvant Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer Immunotherapy (MAGRIT) trial initiated in October 2007.<sup>31</sup>

## PATIENTS AND METHODS

### Study Design

The clinical study (NCT00455572) was an open, non-randomized phase I/II study conducted at 18 centers in five European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and United Kingdom) and Canada. The study was conducted in accordance with good clinical practice guidelines and all applicable regulatory requirements, including the Declaration of Helsinki (1996). The protocol was approved by the review boards at all participating institutions, and all patients gave written informed consent.

Eligible patients had pathological stage IB, II, or III (but not III/N2–3<sup>47</sup>) NSCLC, which was MAGE A3-positive (determined by reverse-transcriptase polymerase chain reaction [PCR] on paraffin-embedded primary tumor sample; Supplementary Methods, Supplemental Digital Content 1, <http://links.lww.com/JTO/A890>). Patients had adequate bone-marrow reserve and renal and hepatic function (Supplementary Methods, Supplemental Digital Content 1, <http://links.lww.com/JTO/A890>). In patients with resected tumors, resection was anatomical, involving at least a lobe and with a level of lymph node sampling corresponding to the standard procedures at the center (Supplementary Methods, Supplemental Digital Content 1, <http://links.lww.com/JTO/A890>). Patients who had concomitant or previous malignancies at other sites (unless the malignancy had been effectively treated), history of anaphylaxis or severe allergic reaction; concurrent severe medical problems,

psychiatric or addictive disorders, and patients who required concomitant treatment with systemic corticosteroids, or any other immunosuppressive agents were not eligible (Supplementary Methods, Supplemental Digital Content 1, <http://links.lww.com/JTO/A890>, for other standard eligibility criteria).

Patients with resected tumors were entered into cohort 1, standard CDDP/VNR chemotherapy concurrently delivered with MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic; cohort 2, chemotherapy ( $\geq 2$  cycles) before MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic; or cohort 3, MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic only. Patients with unresectable stage III tumors were entered into cohort 4, chemotherapy ( $\geq 2$  cycles) and radiotherapy before MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic. Patients in cohort 1 or 2 had Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group scores less than or equal to 1 at screening, whereas patients in cohort 3 or 4 had Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group scores less than or equal to 2 at screening. Patients in cohort 4 had stable disease or objective responses (confirmed by computed tomography scan) after standard radiotherapy/chemotherapy.

## Study Treatment

The treatment plan included eight doses (3 weeks apart) of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic (the study treatment; GSK Vaccines, Rixensart, Belgium; Fig. 1A). The first dose was within 4 to 12 weeks after resection (cohorts 1 and 3), 2 to 4 weeks after adjuvant chemotherapy (cohort 2), or 2 to 6 weeks after radiotherapy/chemotherapy (cohort 4). In cohort 1, the first four doses of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic and chemotherapy were administered concurrently, with MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic being administered on day 8 of each chemotherapy cycle. In cohort 2, MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic was administered 2 to 4 weeks after completion of all chemotherapy cycles. Chemotherapy consisted of four consecutive cycles, at 3-week intervals: CDDP (80 mg/m<sup>2</sup>) on day 1; VNR (30 mg/m<sup>2</sup>) on days 1 and 8 (Supplementary Methods, Supplemental Digital Content 1, <http://links.lww.com/JTO/A890>, for dose modification rules for chemotherapy). MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic was injected intramuscularly (one dose = 0.5 ml) in the deltoid or lateral region of the thigh, alternating left and right side for subsequent doses. MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic contained recombinant MAGE-A3 protein (300  $\mu$ g)<sup>48</sup> and GSK's proprietary immunostimulant, AS15 (Supplementary Methods, Supplemental Digital Content 1, <http://links.lww.com/JTO/A890>, for the preparation of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic for injection).

## Endpoints

The safety endpoints were the occurrence of adverse events (AEs), including abnormal hematological and biochemical laboratory values and potential immune-mediated disorders, and serious adverse events (SAEs), primarily from the first dose to 30 days after the last dose of the MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic. The immunogenicity endpoints were MAGE-A3-specific antibody seropositivity and T-cell responses to treatment primarily after the fourth dose.

## Safety Assessment

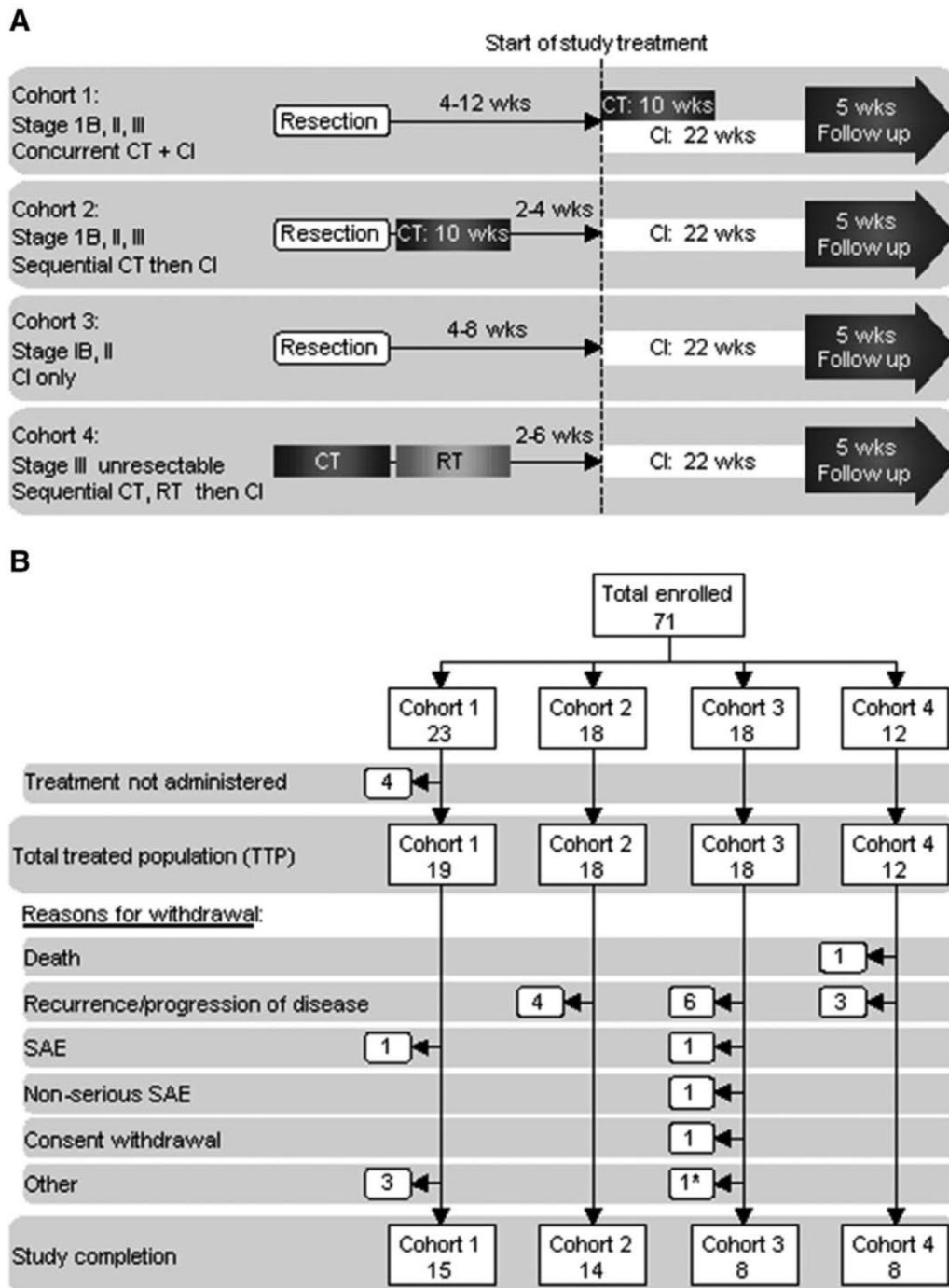
All AEs including SAEs were evaluated by the investigator and were categorized according to Medical Dictionary for Regulatory Activities (MedDRA) terminology (version 12.0;

MedDRA MSSO, McLean, VA). Each AE/SAE was graded for intensity according to the International Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events (CTCAE; version 3.0; National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, MD) and was assessed for its relationship with the MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic treatment. SAEs were identified in accordance with the standard definition (Supplementary Methods, Supplemental Digital Content 1, <http://links.lww.com/JTO/A890>).

## Immunogenicity Assessments

MAGE-A3-specific antibody concentrations were determined using an adapted enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay methodology<sup>32</sup> with reference to a standard curve of positive control samples (values are reported as enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay units per milliliter). Peroxidase-linked anti-human IgG (CAPPEL Inc., PA) was used to detect antibodies bound to recombinant MAGE-A3 antigen. Seropositivity was defined as an antibody concentration greater than or equal to 27 enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay units per milliliter, and a humoral response to treatment defined by seroconversion or by greater than or equal to twofold increase in concentration compared with pretreatment. MAGE-A3-specific CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses were assessed by *in vitro* peptide-stimulation of peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) using intracellular-cytokine staining and flow cytometry. Frozen stocks of PBMCs were prepared from blood samples using routine procedures. For each sample, freshly thawed PBMCs were seeded ( $2 \times 10^5$  cells/round-bottom well, in a 96-well plate) into 24 wells and incubated in culture medium (Roswell Park Memorial Institute medium plus 10% horse serum) supplemented with interleukin-2 (10 IU/ml) and interleukin-7 (20 ng/ml) and containing a peptide pool (15 mers with 10 amino-acid overlaps) spanning the entire sequence of MAGE-A3 protein at 1  $\mu$ g/ml/peptide. A predefined cutoff of less than 60% viability invalidated a thawed PBMC sample for further analysis. Each well was split in two on day 7, pooled back down to 12 wells on day 13. On day 14, each well was split in two, and 12 wells were incubated for 6 hours with the culture medium containing the peptide pool (test), and the other 12 duplicate wells were incubated with the culture medium without the peptide pool (control); with Brefeldin A being added after 2-hour incubation. Intracellular cytokine staining was performed with the following antibodies anti-CD3<sup>PerCP</sup>, anti-CD4<sup>PE-cy7</sup>, anti-CD8<sup>APC-cy7</sup>, anti-interferon (anti-IFN)- $\gamma$ <sup>FITC</sup>, and anti-tumor necrosis factor<sup>PE</sup> (anti-TNF<sup>PE</sup>), and fluorescence-activated cell sorting was then used to detect and enumerate CD4<sup>+</sup> or CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells that were also IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> TNF- $\alpha$ <sup>+</sup> (at least 3000 T cells were required to validate the well). A ratio of the percentages of IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> TNF- $\alpha$ <sup>+</sup> (CD4<sup>+</sup> or CD8<sup>+</sup>) T cells/all (CD4<sup>+</sup> or CD8<sup>+</sup>) T cells in the peptide-stimulated (test) well versus the peptide-unstimulated (control) well was calculated for each pair of duplicate wells. A T-cell immunogenicity score was determined as the geometric mean of the ratios in the pairs of duplicate wells. A PBMC sample was valid when at least 7 of 12 of these ratios were used to determine the T-cell immunogenicity score. A MAGE-A3-specific (CD4<sup>+</sup> or CD8<sup>+</sup>) T-cell response was identified if the patient's T-cell immunogenicity score was above the cut-off score (CD4<sup>+</sup> = 8.4; or CD8<sup>+</sup> = 3.2). The cut-off scores were





**FIGURE 1.** A, Study design. B, The allocation and participation of patients during the course of the study. A, The treatment plan included eight doses (3 weeks apart) of MAGE-A3 cancer immunotherapeutic (CI). In cohort 1, CI was integrated into the chemotherapy (CT) treatment schedule such that the first four doses of CI were administered on the eighth day of each of the four chemotherapy cycles. B, All patients in the total treated population (TTP) were included for the analyses of safety. The reasons for withdrawal from the study are described to the left. \*Note that this one patient in cohort 3 received the full eight-dose regimen but did not attend the concluding visit. Note that the three “other” reasons for withdrawal in cohort 1 included reduced compliance, the diagnosis of a different type of cancer, and a comorbidity related to a suspected cytochrome polymorphism. Cohort 1, concurrent chemotherapy + immunotherapy; cohort 2, sequential chemotherapy then immunotherapy; Cohort 3, immunotherapy only; Cohort 4 (unresectable non-small-cell lung cancer), sequential chemotherapy, radiotherapy, then immunotherapy.

derived using the same methodology but with PBMCs from 24 healthy Caucasian donors; and calculated as the upper 95th percentile of 24 T-cell immunogenicity scores. A MAGE-A3-specific T-cell response to treatment was identified if the T-cell immunogenicity score postdose 4 or postdose 8 was above the cutoff and was greater than or equal to fourfold higher than pretreatment.

## Statistics

This was the first study of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic in a target population of MAGE A3-positive NSCLC patients who were receiving, or had recently received, chemotherapy after tumor resection. The sample size was, therefore, typical of studies of this kind and was based on general experience rather than any formal estimate or hypothesis. It was anticipated that out of 18 patients enrolled in a cohort, 15 patients would be evaluated for immunogenicity. Appropriate descriptive statistics were applied to demographic and other baseline characteristics. SAS (version 9.2, SAS Institute Inc. Cary, NC) was used for all computations.

## RESULTS

### Patients and Treatment

From May 2007 to February 2013, 428 patients were screened. Of those patients with available and valid tumor-PCR results, 33% (106/320) had *MAGE-A3*-positive tumors. From those 106 patients, 71 were enrolled in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4 (23, 18, 18, and 12, respectively; Fig. 1). Sixty-seven patients received at least one dose of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic (19, 18, 18, and 12 in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively) and were included in the total treated population, in which the study endpoints were evaluated.

Patients were aged from 37 to 81 years (median 61 years; Table 1). The majority of patients were male (78%).

As expected, more patients in cohort 3 (12/18) had stage IB tumors than in cohorts 1 (3/19) and 2 (3/18).

All patients in cohorts 2 and 4 received at least two cycles of prior chemotherapy. All patients in cohort 4 except one received prior radiotherapy. The full eight doses of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic were received by 46 out of 67 (69%) patients. These included 15 out of 19 (79%), 14 out of 18 (78%), 9 out of 18 (50%), and 8 out of 12 (68%) patients in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively (Fig. 1). In cohort 1, 16 out of 19 (84%) patients received at least two cycles of concomitant chemotherapy and for those who completed the study, 9 out of 15 (60%) received the full 80 mg/m<sup>2</sup> doses of CDDP, and 1 out of 15 (7%) received carboplatin instead of CDDP. The largest dose reduction of CDDP was by 25% to 60 mg/m<sup>2</sup>, which occurred in 2 out of 15 (13%) patients.

The most frequent reason for early discontinuation from the study was the recurrence of disease, and this occurred in cohort 2 (4/18; 22%), cohort 3 (6/18; 33%), and cohort 4 (3/12; 25%), but not in cohort 1 (Fig. 1B). Other reasons for discontinuations included one patient who died (cohort 4; because of a bronchial hemorrhage); two patients who withdrew because of treatment-unrelated SAEs (cohorts 1 and 3; pneumonia and cardiac failure, respectively); one patient who withdrew because of a nonserious AE (cohort 3; influenza-like illness); one patient who withdrew consent (cohort 3); one patient who was lost to follow-up (cohort 3); and three patients who withdrew for other reasons (cohort 1; Fig. 1).

### Safety

All patients in cohorts 1 and 2 and most patients in cohort 3 (17/18; 94%) and cohort 4 (11/12, 92%) reported AEs (Table 2 and Fig. 2). Most patients (67–94%) in each cohort reported AEs in the general disorders and administration site conditions category. In cohort 1, 14 out of 19 (74%) patients reported gastrointestinal disorders (mainly nausea,

**TABLE 1.** Patient Characteristics

|                         | All                    | Cohort 1    | Cohort 2   | Cohort 3   | Cohort 4   |           |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Enrolled patients       | 71                     | 23          | 18         | 18         | 12         |           |
| TTP                     | 67                     | 19          | 18         | 18         | 12         |           |
| Median age (range), yr  | 61 (37–81)             | 59 (37–75)  | 61 (47–69) | 68 (51–81) | 62 (48–73) |           |
| Sex (%)                 | Female                 | 15 (22)     | 5 (26)     | 3 (17)     | 2 (11)     | 5 (42)    |
|                         | Male                   | 52 (78)     | 14 (74)    | 15 (83)    | 16 (89)    | 7 (58)    |
| ECOG performance status | 0                      | 23          | 3          | 8          | 4          | 8         |
|                         | 1                      | 43          | 16         | 10         | 13         | 4         |
|                         | 2                      | 1           | 0          | 0          | 1          | 0         |
| Stage                   | Stage IB               | 18          | 3          | 3          | 12         | 0         |
|                         | Stage II (IIA, IIB)    | 17 (3, 14)  | 6 (1, 5)   | 9 (2, 7)   | 2 (0, 2)   | 0         |
|                         | Stage III (IIIA, IIIB) | 32 (21, 11) | 10 (9, 1)  | 6 (5, 1)   | 4 (3, 1)   | 12 (4, 8) |
| Histology type          | Squamous               | 29          | 9          | 10         | 9          | 1         |
|                         | Nonsquamous            | 38          | 10         | 8          | 9          | 11        |
| Type of surgery         | Lobectomy              | 42          | 13         | 13         | 16         | 0         |
|                         | Pneumonectomy          | 13          | 6          | 5          | 2          | 0         |

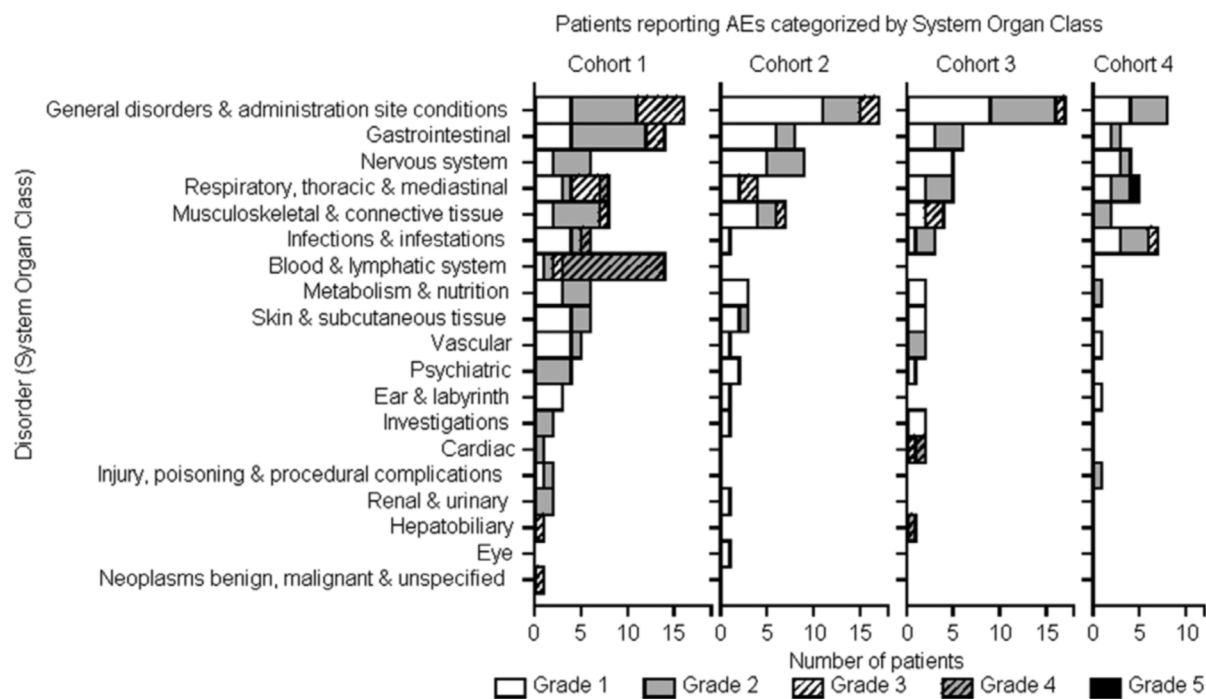
Cohort 1, concurrent chemotherapy + immunotherapy; cohort 2, sequential chemotherapy then immunotherapy; cohort 3, immunotherapy only; cohort 4 (unresectable NSCLC), sequential chemotherapy, radiotherapy, then immunotherapy; NSCLC, non–small-cell lung cancer; TTP, total treated population.

**TABLE 2.** Summary of Patient Numbers Reporting AEs/SAEs from the First Dose to 30 Days After the Last Dose of the MAGE-A3 Immunotherapeutic

| Adverse Events          |                   | Cohort 1<br>(N = 19), n (%) | Cohort 2<br>(N = 18), n (%) | Cohort 3<br>(N = 18), n (%) | Cohort 4<br>(N = 12), n (%) |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Any                     | All grades        | 19 (100)                    | 18 (100)                    | 17 (94)                     | 11 (92)                     |
|                         | Grade 3           | 5 (26)                      | 2 (11)                      | 3 (17)                      | 1 (8)                       |
|                         | Grade 4           | 11 (58)                     | 0                           | 2 (11)                      | 0                           |
|                         | Grade 5           | 0                           | 0                           | 0                           | 1 (8)                       |
|                         | SAEs <sup>a</sup> | 14 (74)                     | 0                           | 4 (22)                      | 3 (25)                      |
| Related to CI treatment | All grades        | 14 (74)                     | 17 (94)                     | 16 (89)                     | 7 (58)                      |
|                         | Grade 3           | 3 (16)                      | 1 (6)                       | 2 (11)                      | 0                           |
|                         | Grade 4           | 0                           | 0                           | 0                           | 0                           |
|                         | Grade 5           | 0                           | 0                           | 0                           | 0                           |
|                         | SAEs              | 0                           | 0                           | 0                           | 0                           |

<sup>a</sup>Two patients in cohort 1 and one patient in Cohort 3 reported SAEs that occurred during the study period but either before the first MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic dose or more than 30 days after the last MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic dose.

AEs, adverse events; SAEs, serious adverse events; CI, cancer immunotherapeutic; cohort 1, concurrent chemotherapy + immunotherapy; cohort 2, sequential chemotherapy then immunotherapy; cohort 3, immunotherapy only; cohort 4 (unresectable NSCLC), sequential chemotherapy, radiotherapy, then immunotherapy; NSCLC, non-small-cell lung cancer.



**FIGURE 2.** The number of patients reporting adverse events (AEs) from the first dose to 30 days after the last dose of the MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic, categorized by MedDRA System Organ Class, in the total treated population (TTP). For a patient reporting an AE with the same System Organ Class on more than one occasion, only the highest graded AE is indicated. Note that the category general disorders and administration site conditions includes the preferred terms; administration site pain, administration site reaction, asthenia, chills, fatigue, gait disturbance, hypothermia, influenza-like illness, injection-site coldness, injection-site erythema, injection-site hematoma, injection-site inflammation, injection-site oedema, injection-site pain, injection-site pruritus, injection-site rash, injection-site reaction, injection-site swelling, malaise, mucosal inflammation, pyrexia, and sense of oppression. Cohort 1, concurrent chemotherapy + immunotherapy; cohort 2, sequential chemotherapy then immunotherapy; cohort 3, immunotherapy only; cohort 4 (unresectable non-small-cell lung cancer), sequential chemotherapy, radiotherapy, then immunotherapy.

constipation, vomiting, and diarrhea) and 14 out of 19 (74%) patients reported blood and lymphatic disorders (mainly neutropenia and anemia), whereas in cohorts 2, 3, and 4, 8 out of 18 (44%), 6 out of 18 (33%), and 3 out of 12 (25%)

patients, respectively, reported gastrointestinal disorders, and no patients reported blood and lymphatic disorders (Fig. 2). Moreover, in cohort 1, most (33/39, 85%) of the gastrointestinal disorders and all (28/28, 100%) of the blood and lymphatic

disorders were reported during the phase when chemotherapy was concomitant with immunotherapy (i.e., up to 7 days after MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic dose 4) and were typical reactions to chemotherapy.

One grade 5 AE, the fatal bronchial hemorrhage (unrelated to study treatment), occurred 20 days after dose 1 in cohort 4. Grade 3/4 AEs were reported for 16 out of 19 (84%), 2 out of 18 (11%), 5 out of 18 (28%), and 1 out of 12 (8%) patients in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively (Table 2). The most frequent of these grade 3/4 AEs in cohort 1 was neutropenia. No other abnormal laboratory values were reported during the study.

Study treatment-related AEs were graded 1 to 3 (mostly 1 or 2) and reported for 14 out of 19 (74%), 17 out of 18 (94%), 16 out of 18 (89%), and 7 out of 12 (58%) patients in cohort 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively (Table 2). Most of the general disorders and administration site conditions were study treatment related. Other categories of related AEs (eg, gastrointestinal, nervous system) were only reported for a minority of patients ( $\leq 4$ ) in each cohort. The related grade 3 AEs were reported for 3 out of 19 (16%), 1 out of 18 (6%), and 2 out of 18 (11%) patients in cohorts 1, 2 and 3, respectively, and all resolved within 5 days. These AEs were injection-site related or musculoskeletal/back pain. No related grade 3 AEs were reported in cohort 4.

Thirty-six SAEs were reported for 21 patients: 28 SAEs for 14 out of 19 (74%) patients in cohort 1, 5 SAEs for 4 out of 18 (22%) patients in cohort 3, and 3 SAEs, including the fatal one, for 3 out of 12 (25%) patients in cohort 4. No patients reported a SAE in cohort 2. No SAE was study treatment related. Thirty-one SAEs were graded 3 or above.

One potential immune-mediated disorder, a grade 1 Raynaud's phenomenon considered as study treatment unrelated, was reported 19 days postdose 2 for a patient in cohort 1.

## Immunogenicity

Immunogenicity results were not obtained from all patients because of missing or invalid samples. Before immunotherapy, 6 out of 65 patients (9%) were seropositive for MAGE-A3-specific antibodies and were in cohort 1 (1/19, 5%), cohort 2 (4/18, 22%), and cohort 4 (1/12, 8%), but not in cohort 3 (0/16). After dose 4, all patients evaluated were seropositive (12, 15, 12, and 9 patients in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively; Fig. 3A) and were humoral responders to immunotherapy.

Before immunotherapy, MAGE-A3-specific CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses were detected in 5 out of 49 (10%) patients: 23% (3/13), 6% (1/17), 0% (0/11), and 12% (1/8) patients in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. MAGE-A3-specific CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses were detected in 2 out of 49 patients (5%), both of whom were in cohort 2 (i.e., 2/17, 6%). Out of these seven patients in whom T-cell responses were detected, only one patient was also antibody seropositive.

After dosing, MAGE-A3-specific CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses to immunotherapy were induced in 36% (4/11), 27% (4/15), 25% (2/8), and 83% (5/6) patients in cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively (Fig. 3B). MAGE-A3-specific CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses to immunotherapy were induced in four patients; 1 out of 11 (9%) in cohort 1, 1 out of 15 (7%) in cohort 2, 0 out of 8 (0%) in cohort 3, and 2 out of 6 (33%) in cohort 4.

## DISCUSSION

Historically, the potential immunosuppressive activity of chemotherapy, and its use with antiemetic corticosteroids, has been viewed as a barrier for its use in combination with immunotherapy.<sup>46</sup> However, recent evidence has suggested that chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy may promote immune-mediated tumor destruction suggesting potential synergistic actions with immunotherapy.<sup>41,46,49</sup> In this study, the immunogenicity and safety of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic treatment in stage IB to III NSCLC patients seemed not to be detrimentally affected by concurrent or prior CDDP/VNR-based chemotherapy or prior radiotherapy, supporting the use of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic in the chemotherapy and radiotherapy settings. Although patients were recruited from many centers in Europe and Canada, the strength and generalizability of the conclusions are limited by the study design: a nonrandomized trial of a small patient population without inferential statistics.

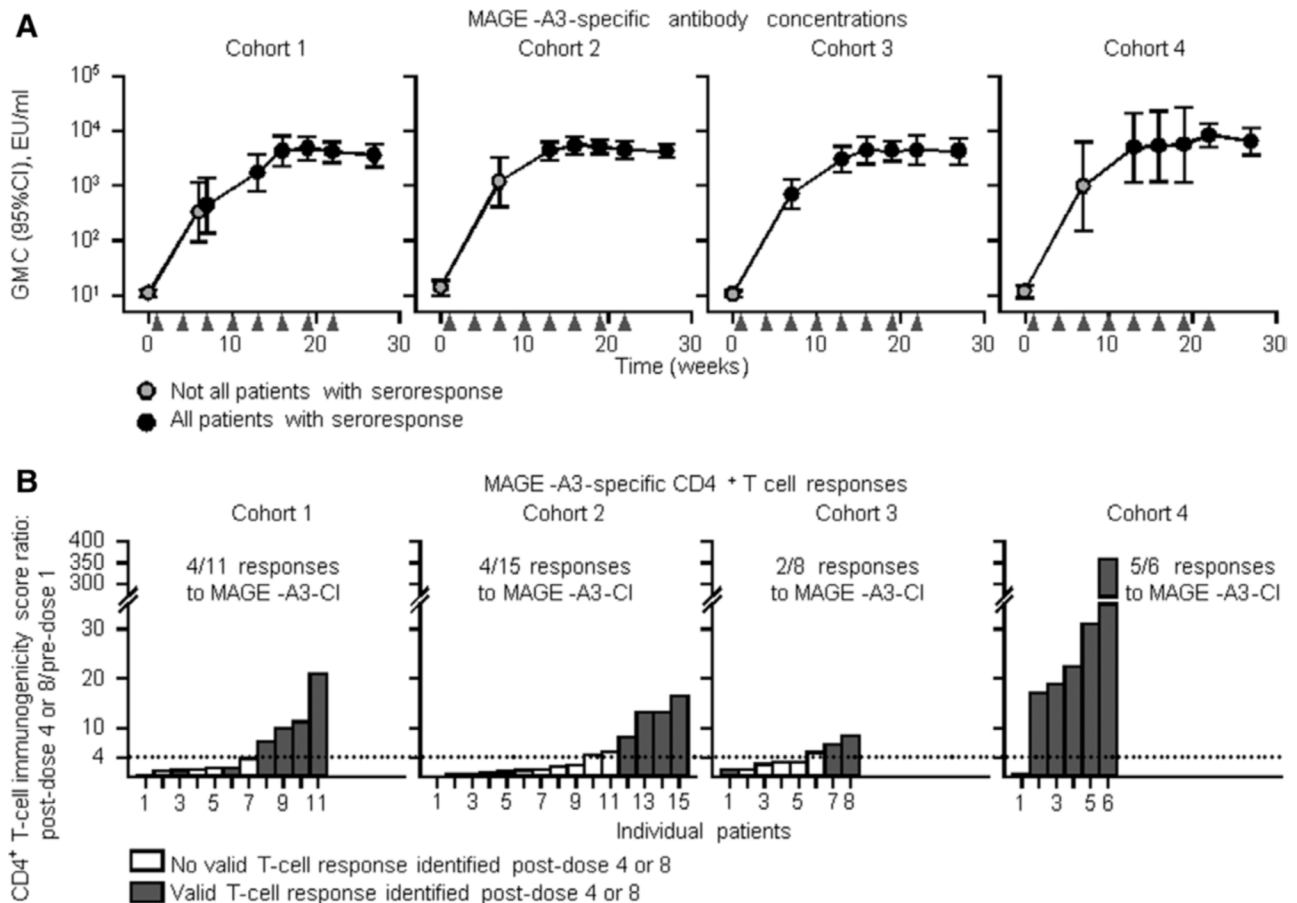
The safety profile of the MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic treatment was in line with what has been observed with previous studies, with mainly grade 1/2 AEs categorized as general disorders and administration site conditions and typical of immunization.<sup>29,30</sup> Grade 3/4 AEs were only frequently observed in cohort 1 and were typical of chemotherapy (eg, neutropenia).<sup>6</sup> The tolerance to chemotherapy in cohort 1 seemed unaffected by the concurrently administered immunotherapy probably reflecting the different modes of action of the two treatments.

Before immunotherapy, a small minority of patients displayed MAGE-A3-specific immune responses (9% antibody, 10% CD4<sup>+</sup> T cell, and 5% CD8<sup>+</sup> T cell) in line with a previous study where 9% patients were seropositive.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, although the tumors were *MAGE-A3* positive by reverse-transcriptase PCR, this positive expression had not necessarily translated into a spontaneous immune response. No association was identified between seropositivity and cell-mediated immune reactivity. Yet there was the suggestion that the prior chemotherapy or radiotherapy administered in cohorts 2 and 4 had elevated the pretreatment frequency of seropositive patients to 17% (6/30) compared with the other adjuvant-setting cohort (5%, 1/19) and to the detection of MAGE-A3-specific CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses in cohort 2.

After four doses of MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic, MAGE-A3-specific antibody responses to immunotherapy were detected in all patients. Although MAGE-A3-specific antibodies may not directly be involved in eradicating tumor cells, they may contribute; because antibody-mediated opsonization of MAGE-A3 has been found to promote cross-presentation to naïve T cells.<sup>50</sup> This potential mechanism may be relevant if MAGE-A3 is released during chemotherapy-related immunogenic tumor-cell death.<sup>41</sup>

MAGE-A3-specific CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses to immunotherapy were detected in 29% (10/34) of patients with resected tumors (cohorts 1–3) and in 83.3% of patients with unresectable tumors (cohort 4). The corresponding CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell responses to immunotherapy were 6% (2/34; cohorts 1–3) and 33% (cohort 4). The higher prevalence and magnitude of these responses in cohort 4 suggested that the presence of tumor tissue combined with its prior exposure to





**FIGURE 3.** MAGE-A3-specific immunogenicity in the total treated population (TTP). A, Geometric mean MAGE-A3-specific antibody concentrations in each cohort, measured in serum samples taken before the first dose (at week 0) of the MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic through week 30. Gray triangles on the x-axis indicate the timings of each of the eight MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic doses. Error bars describe 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs). At weeks 0, 7, 13, 16, 19, 22, and 27; N = 19, 12, 15, 15, 15, 15, and 15, in cohort 1, respectively; N = 18, 17, 15, 16, 14, 12, and 13 in cohort 2, respectively; and N = 17, 14, 12, 11, 11, 9, and 9, in cohort 3, and N = 12, 10, 9, 8, 8, 8 and 7, in cohort 4, respectively. At week 6 in cohort 1, N = 13. B, MAGE-A3-specific ratios of CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell immunogenicity scores (based on the frequencies of interferon (IFN)- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> tumor necrosis factor (TNF)- $\alpha$ <sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells in peptide-stimulation cultures of peripheral blood mononuclear cells [PBMCs] in vitro) for individual patients in each cohort, typically calculated as the higher of the two T-cell immunogenicity scores posttreatment divided by the T-cell immunogenicity score pretreatment. The postimmunotherapy scores were evaluated 3 weeks postdose 4 or 5 weeks postdose 8, except for two patients in cohort 1 and one patient in cohort 4. In these patients, the scores were evaluated in PBMC samples taken before the patients' early discontinuation (at least after dose 1). Bars in gray or white describe ratios for samples in which posttreatment MAGE-A3-specific T-cell responses were or were not identified (i.e., T-cell immunogenicity score was above or below the cutoff), respectively. A MAGE-A3-specific CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell response to immunotherapy was induced if the T-cell immunogenicity score posttreatment was above the cutoff and was greater than or equal to fourfold higher (dotted line) than the T-cell immunogenicity score pretreatment. Cohort 1, concurrent chemotherapy + immunotherapy; cohort 2, sequential chemotherapy then immunotherapy; cohort 3, immunotherapy only; cohort 4 (unresectable non-small-cell lung cancer), sequential chemotherapy, radiotherapy, then immunotherapy.

radiotherapy/chemotherapy (potentially promoting immunogenic-cell death) may have supported the development of T-cell responses to immunotherapy.<sup>41,43,44</sup>

In the recent placebo-controlled MAGRIT phase III trial,<sup>31</sup> the treatment of stage IB, II, and IIIA NSCLC patients with MAGE-A3 immunotherapeutic in the equivalent adjuvant settings used for cohorts 2 and 3 did not increase disease-free survival. However, the MAGRIT trial was not designed to evaluate cell-mediated immunity. In cohorts 2 and 3 in this study, 4 out of 18 and 6 out of 18 patients had relapsed by the

concluding visit, respectively, whereas in cohort 1, no patients had relapsed. Moreover, cohorts 1 and 2 contained more patients with stages II and III tumors than cohort 3. However, given the limitation of the study design, further investigations would be required to evaluate whether the concurrent administration of chemotherapy with immunotherapy resulted in better clinical outcomes. Also given the recent results of MAGRIT and the trials evaluating immune-checkpoint inhibitors, the induction of tumor-specific immune responses may be insufficient for improving clinical outcomes in the absence



of releasing the immune blockade.<sup>24–28</sup> Nevertheless, this study demonstrated that administering active immunotherapy and chemotherapy together is feasible. The earlier development of a tumor-specific immune response should be advantageous in a disease setting where relapse tends to be relatively rapid postsurgery.

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