Intravitreal Aflibercept (VEGF Trap-Eye) in Wet Age-related Macular Degeneration

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Objective: Two similarly designed, phase-3 studies (VEGF Trap-Eye: Investigation of Efficacy and Safety in Wet AMD [VIEW 1, VIEW 2]) of neovascular age-related macular degeneration (AMD) compared monthly and every-2-month dosing of intravitreal aflibercept injection (VEGF Trap-Eye; Regeneron, Tarrytown, NY, and Bayer HealthCare, Berlin, Germany) with monthly ranibizumab.

Design: Double-masked, multicenter, parallel-group, active-controlled, randomized trials.

Participants: Patients (n = 2419) with active, subfoveal, choroidal neovascularization (CNV) lesions (or juxtafoveal lesions with leakage affecting the fovea) secondary to AMD.

Intervention: Patients were randomized to intravitreal aflibercept 0.5 mg monthly (0.5q4), 2 mg monthly (2q4), 2 mg every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses (2q8), or ranibizumab 0.5 mg monthly (Rq4).

Main Outcome Measures: The primary end point was noninferiority (margin of 10%) of the aflibercept regimens to ranibizumab in the proportion of patients maintaining vision at week 52 (losing <15 letters on Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study [ETDRS] chart). Other key end points included change in best-corrected visual acuity (BCVA) and anatomic measures.

Results: All aflibercept groups were noninferior and clinically equivalent to monthly ranibizumab for the primary end point (the 2q4, 0.5q4, and 2q8 regimens were 95.1%, 95.9%, and 95.1%, respectively, for VIEW 1, and 95.6%, 96.3%, and 95.6%, respectively, for VIEW 2, whereas monthly ranibizumab was 94.4% in both studies). In a prespecified integrated analysis of the 2 studies, all aflibercept regimens were within 0.5 letters of the reference ranibizumab for mean change in BCVA; all aflibercept regimens also produced similar improvements in anatomic measures. Ocular and systemic adverse events were similar across treatment groups.

Conclusions: Intravitreal aflibercept dosed monthly or every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses produced similar efficacy and safety outcomes as monthly ranibizumab. These studies demonstrate that aflibercept is an effective treatment for AMD, with the every-2-month regimen offering the potential to reduce the risk from monthly intravitreal injections and the burden of monthly monitoring.

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**Group members listed online in Appendix 1 (http://aaojournal.org).*

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a leading cause of vision loss and blindness in industrialized countries.[1] The most severe vision loss occurs in the neovascular (or wet) form of AMD, involving choroidal neovascularization (CNV) and associated retinal edema. Early treatments for CNV (laser ablation, photodynamic therapy with verteporfin), although clearly better than no treatment at all, decreased severe vision loss rather than truly stabilizing vision or resulting in clinically significant improvements in visual acuity.[2–4] The suggestion that vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) might be driving the CNV and associated edema seen in AMD led to a paradigm shift with the success of the first anti-VEGF therapy, pegaptanib sodium.[5,6] Monthly intravitreal injections of 0.5 mg ranibizumab, a humanized monoclonal antibody fragment that blocks VEGF, not only prevent vision loss in most patients but also lead to significant visual gain in approximately one-third.[7,8] The risk of rare but serious adverse events resulting from the intravitreal procedure, together with the significant burden of making monthly visits to their retinal specialist, have led to extensive efforts to decrease injection and monitoring frequency. However, fixed quarterly[9,10] or "as needed" (pro re nata [PRN]) dosing regimens,[11,12] without requiring monthly monitoring visits, were not effective at maintaining vision.

The Comparison of AMD Treatments Trials (CATT)[13] recently compared monthly ranibizumab with monthly

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bevacizumab, as well as with PRN regimens that required monthly monitoring visits during which treatment decisions primarily were made on the basis of anatomic criteria. Monthly bevacizumab resulted in mean best-corrected visual acuity (BCVA) gains (8.0 letters) similar to those for monthly ranibizumab (8.5 letters), whereas PRN ranibizumab yielded a mean BCVA gain of 1.7 letters less than that of the monthly standard (with a confidence interval [CI] extending to 4.7 letters below) that achieved noninferiority, and PRN bevacizumab yielded a mean BCVA gain 2.6 letters below the monthly standard (with a CI extending to 5.9 letters below) that did not achieve noninferiority. In the CATT, monthly bevacizumab and both PRN regimens were significantly worse than monthly ranibizumab in terms of the proportion of patients who had fluid-free retinas on optical coherence tomography (OCT). Although CIs were not provided for monthly and PRN regimens, switching from monthly to PRN regimens in the second year of the CATT resulted in a significant worsening of BCVA and retinal thickness, as well as a significant decrease in the proportion of patients without retinal fluid.[14] The "alternative treatments to Inhibit VEGF in Age-related choroidal Neovascularization" (IVAN) study also found that the mean foveal retinal thickness and the percentage of patients with fluorescein leakage were significantly higher with the PRN regimen compared with the monthly regimen.[15] In the HARBOR study (Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci 2012;53:E-Abstract 3677), PRN regimens of both the approved 0.5 mg dose and the higher 2 mg dose of

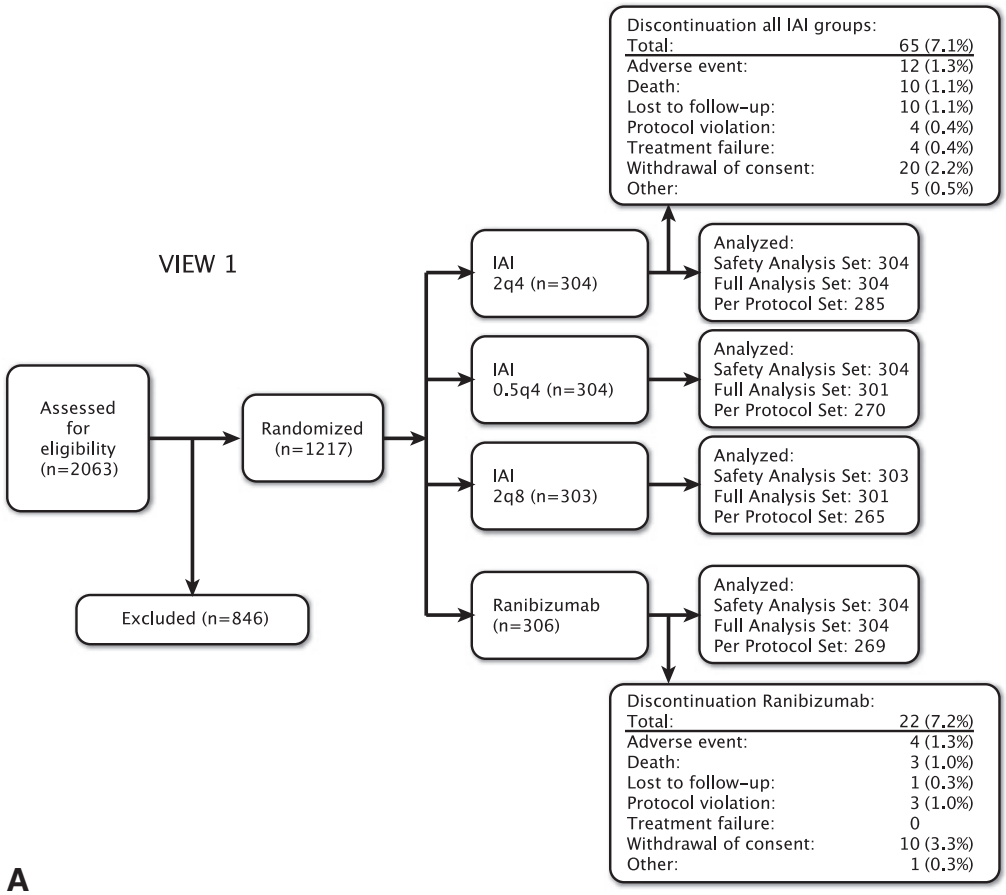

Figure 1. Flowcharts describing treatment allocation and patient disposition in VIEW 1 **(A)** and VIEW 2 **(B)**. In both VIEW 1 and VIEW 2 studies, the most common reason for patients to be screened but not randomized was ineligibility based on angiographic characteristics as identified by the reading center. The second most common reason was visual acuity out of range. Discontinuations are those that occurred from the study. Two milligrams intravitreal aflibercept every 2 months (2q8) dosing was performed after 3 initial monthly doses. The numbers of patients who prematurely discontinued study medication in the 2q4, 0.5q4, 2q8, and Rq4 groups were 16 (5.3%), 30 (9.9%), 30 (9.9%), and 27 (8.8%), respectively, in VIEW 1; and 37 (11.8%), 45 (14.5%), 33 (10.5%), and 33 (10.9%), respectively, in VIEW 2. In VIEW 1, 1089 patients were included in the per protocol set (PPS), with 92.6% to 96.1% completing week-52 visual acuity assessment. A total of 128 patients were not included in the PPS for the following reasons (in order of occurrence): missed 2 consecutive injections before ninth injection, major protocol deviation, received <9 injections, had <9 assessments, no baseline assessments, no post-baseline assessments. In VIEW 2, 1081 patients were included in the PPS with 95.9% to 97.8% completing week-52 visual acuity assessment. A total of 159 patients were not included in the PPS for the following main reasons: missed 2 consecutive injections before ninth injection, major protocol deviation, received <9 injections, had <9 assessments, no baseline assessments, no post-baseline assessments, unmasking by investigator or Global Pharmacovigilance. 0.5q4 = 0.5 mg IAI monthly; 2q4 = 2 mg IAI monthly; 2q8 = 2 mg IAI every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses; IAI = intravitreal aflibercept injection.

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ranibizumab did not achieve noninferiority compared with monthly ranibizumab, with the 0.5 mg PRN regimen yielding a mean BCVA gain 2.0 letters below the monthly standard (with a CI extending to 4.5 letters below). Of note, just like the CATT PRN regimens, the HARBOR PRN regimens still depended on monthly monitoring visits. Thus, there remains a need for new therapies that will provide equivalent efficacy and anatomic disease control to monthly ranibizumab, while reducing the risk of monthly injections and the burden of mandatory monthly monitoring visits.

Intravitreal aflibercept injection (IAI) (previously known in the scientific literature as VEGF Trap-Eye, Regeneron, Tarrytown, NY, and Bayer HealthCare, Berlin, Germany) is a soluble decoy receptor fusion protein[16,17] that is specifically purified and formulated for intraocular injection. Intravitreal aflibercept at doses of 0.5 mg and 2 mg provided the most robust outcomes in the Clinical Evaluation of Antiangiogenesis in the Retina Intravitreal Trial Phase 2 (CLEAR-IT 2) study after 4 monthly administrations followed by PRN dosing to week 52.[18] The binding affinity of intravitreal aflibercept to VEGF is substantially greater than that of bevacizumab or ranibizumab.[17] The greater affinity could translate into a higher efficacy or, as predicted by a mathematic model, into a substantially longer duration of action in the eye,[19] allowing for less frequent dosing, as supported by early clinical trials.[18,20] In this article, we report the first-year results of 2 phase 3 studies comparing intravitreal aflibercept, monthly or every 2 months, with monthly ranibizumab.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

The "VEGF Trap-Eye: Investigation of Efficacy and Safety in Wet AMD" studies (VIEW 1 and VIEW 2) were similarly designed, prospective, double-masked, multinational, parallel-group, active-controlled, randomized clinical trials. The investigators from the VIEW 1 and VIEW 2 studies are listed in Appendix 1, available at http://aaojournal.org. Patients in VIEW 1 (registered at www.clinicaltrials.gov on July 31, 2007; NCT00509795. Accessed August 8, 2012) were randomized at 154 sites in the United States and Canada. Patients in VIEW 2 (registered at www.clinicaltrials.gov on March 12, 2008; NCT00637377. Accessed August 8, 2012) were randomized at 172 sites in Europe, the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America; the last patient in both studies completed 52 weeks in September 2010. The study protocols were approved by institutional review boards or ethics committees for each clinical site; all participants provided written informed consent. All the US study sites complied with the Health Insurance

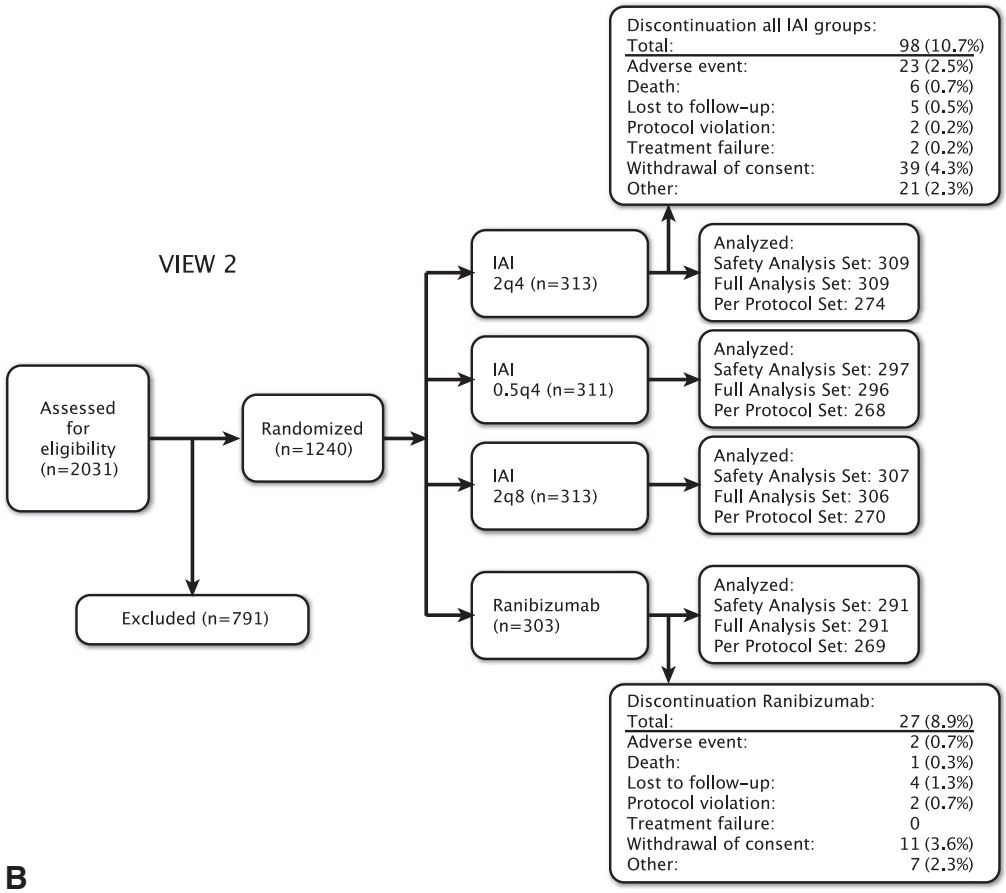

Figure 1. (Continued.)

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Portability and Accountability Act. The 52-week outcomes are reported.

Participants

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were designed to maintain constancy with the pivotal trials for the reference drug ranibizumab, consistent with regulatory guidelines for noninferiority studies, and included (1) age ≥50 years with active subfoveal CNV lesions (any subtype) secondary to AMD; juxtafoveal lesions with leakage affecting the fovea also were allowed; (2) CNV comprising at least 50% of total lesion size; and (3) BCVA between 73 and 25 Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study chart (ETDRS) letters (20/40–20/320 Snellen equivalent). Patients with prior treatment for AMD (including an investigational agent or anti-VEGF therapy) in the study eye were excluded. Eligibility was determined using fluorescein angiography at the reading center. Complete eligibility criteria are shown in Appendix 2 (available at http://aaojournal.org).

Treatment Groups and Randomization

Patients were randomized in a 1:1:1:1 ratio to the following regimens: 0.5 mg aflibercept every 4 weeks (0.5q4); 2 mg aflibercept every 4 weeks (2q4); 2 mg aflibercept every 8 weeks (2q8) after 3 injections at week 0, 4, and 8 (to maintain masking, sham injections were given at the interim 4-week visits after week 8); or 0.5 mg ranibizumab every 4 weeks (Rq4). Consecutively enrolled patients were assigned to treatment groups on the basis of a predetermined central randomization scheme with balanced allocation, managed by an interactive voice response system.

End Points and Statistical Analyses

The primary end point analysis, noninferiority margins, and definition of "clinical equivalence" were established in discussion with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (as part of a Special Protocol Assessment), European Medicines Agency, Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Agency and other regulatory authorities, with the intent of maintaining constancy with the previous ranibizumab pivotal trials[7,8] and preserving the majority of the treatment effect demonstrated in these trials. The primary end point analysis was noninferiority of the intravitreal aflibercept regimens to ranibizumab in the proportion of patients maintaining vision at week 52 (losing <15 ETDRS letters; per protocol data set) in each study. A noninferiority margin of 10% in the individual studies was chosen to preserve approximately two-thirds of the ranibizumab effect for prevention of moderate vision loss (loss of <15 letters) demonstrated in pivotal ranibizumab studies,[7,8] using the 2 CI approach. The FDA suggested that a margin of 5% could determine clinical equivalence. Thus, the margin of 10% was used for assessing noninferiority, and the margin of 5% was used for assessing clinical equivalence. The prespecified analysis plan also included a prospectively planned integrated analysis combining the 2 VIEW studies; in this integrated analysis, the European Medicines Agency/Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use requested a noninferiority margin of 7%. In the individual studies, the primary end point was assessed by a prespecified hierarchical testing sequence of noninferiority to ranibizumab with the sequence of aflibercept 2q4, 0.5q4, and then 2q8 to control the 5% (4.9% for VIEW 1) overall type I error while maintaining a 5% significance level (4.9% for VIEW 1) for each individual comparison (see Appendices 3 and 4 for details of the statistical analysis, available at http://aaojournal.org). If all aflibercept groups demonstrated noninferiority to ranibizumab for the primary end point, additional comparisons with ranibizumab were prespecified regarding the secondary end points, also using a hierarchical testing sequence in which each secondary end point was tested for superiority of aflibercept over ranibizumab. Prespecified secondary efficacy variables compared baseline and 52-week data regarding mean change in BCVA; gaining ≥15 letters; change in total National Eye Institute 25-Item Visual Function Questionnaire (NEI VFQ-25) score; and change in CNV area on fluorescein angiography. Anatomic measures included retinal thickness and persistent fluid as assessed by OCT. Change in BCVA also was assessed as part of the prospectively planned prespecified integrated analysis combining the 2 studies.

The full analysis set included all randomized patients who received any study medication and had a baseline and at least 1 post-baseline BCVA assessment. The per protocol set (PPS) included all patients in the full analysis set who (1) received at least 9 doses of study drug and attended at least 9 scheduled visits during the first year, (2) had not missed 2 consecutive injections before administration of the ninth injection (per patient), and (3) did not have major protocol violations. Sham injections were counted as doses administered for the purpose of defining the PPS. The PPS included patients who discontinued the study because of treatment failure, without a major protocol deviation, at any time during the first 52 weeks (even if they met points 1 and 2 above). These patients were considered nonresponders for the primary end-point analysis. The last observation carried forward (LOCF) approach was used to impute missing values. When indicated, the robustness of analysis results was assessed by using the observed case or completers' data. A completer was defined as a patient who received treatment for at least 9 months and had efficacy data for at least 9 months during the 52 weeks of study. The missing values for completers also were imputed using the LOCF approach.

Schedule of Visits and Assessments

Patients were examined on the day of treatment initiation and every 4 weeks thereafter through 52 weeks, as well as 1 week after first treatment for safety assessment (subsequent safety assessments occurred by telephone). Each 4-week visit included BCVA assessment and anterior/posterior segment examination (with intraocular pressure determination) before injection (active or sham) and posterior segment examination with intraocular pressure determination 30 to 60 minutes after injection. For the 2q8 treatment group, no treatment decisions were made at the interim monthly visits. The NEI VFQ-25 assessment occurred at screening and weeks 12, 24, 36, and 52. Adverse events were recorded at every visit.

Imaging Assessments

Fundus photography and fluorescein angiography were performed at screening and weeks 24 and 52, and evaluated by an independent center (Digital Angiography Reading Center, New York). Optical coherence tomography was performed using time domain Stratus machines (Carl Zeiss Meditec, Jena, Germany) and evaluated by an independent center (VIEW 1: OCT Reading Center at Duke, Durham, NC; VIEW 2: Vienna Reading Center, Austria). Visual acuity examiners were certified to ensure consistent measurement of BCVA. In VIEW 1, OCT was performed at screening, at the treatment initiation visit, and at weeks 4, 12, 24, 36, and 52

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(and was optional at the investigators' discretion at other study visits). In VIEW 2, OCT was performed at every study visit. Areas of visible CNV (classic or occult) were identified when angiographic analyses showed evidence of late leakage or pooling of dye.

Masking

Patients were masked as to treatments. An unmasked investigator performed the study drug or sham injection. An unmasked investigator also was responsible for the receipt, tracking, preparation, destruction, and administration of study drug, as well as safety assessments both pre- and post-dose. A separate masked physician assessed adverse events and supervised the masked assessment of efficacy. All other study site personnel were masked to treatment assignment by separating study records or masked packaging. Optical coherence tomography technicians and visual acuity examiners remained masked relative to treatment assignment. Intravitreal aflibercept and sham kits were packaged identically. Lucentis (Genentech Inc, South San Francisco, CA) was obtained commercially but only prepared and delivered by unmasked personnel at the sites.

Results

Patient Disposition, Baseline Characteristics, and Exposure

The disposition of patients is shown in Figure 1A-B. In VIEW 1, 1217 patients were randomized, with 91.1% to 96.4% of patients completing 52 weeks. In VIEW 2, 1240 patients were randomized, with 88.1% to 91.1% completing 52 weeks. Baseline demographics and disease characteristics were evenly balanced among all treatment groups (Table 1). The mean number of active injections received by patients in all monthly treatment arms, which were scheduled to receive 13 monthly injections, was 12.1 to 12.5 in VIEW 1 and 12.2 to 12.4 in VIEW 2. The aflibercept every-2-month groups, scheduled to receive 3 initial monthly injections followed by 5 active injections over the next 10 months, received an average of 7.5 active injections in VIEW 1 and in VIEW 2.

Primary End Point Analysis

In both studies, the proportion of patients maintaining vision was similar among all treatment groups in the prespecified per-protocol analysis and the full analysis set (Table 2). All aflibercept groups achieved statistical noninferiority compared with monthly ranibizumab, with the CIs of the difference between ranibizumab and

Table 1. Patient Demographics and Baseline Characteristics

	VIEW 1				VIEW 2			
	Ranibizumab	*Intravitreal Aflibercept*			*Ranibizumab*	*Intravitreal Aflibercept*		
	0.5q4	*2q4*	*0.5q4*	*2q8*	*0.5q4*	*2q4*	*0.5q4*	*2q8*
N (full analysis set)	304	304	301	301	291	309	296	306
Age, yrs (mean ± SD)	78.2±7.6	77.7±7.9	78.4±8.1	77.9±8.4	73.0±9.0	74.1±8.5	74.7±8.6	73.8±8.6
Race								
White	296 (97.4)	295 (97.0)	291 (96.7)	287 (95.3)	213 (73.2)	226 (73.1)	219 (74.0)	217 (70.9)
Black	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	0	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	0	1 (0.3)	2 (0.7)
Asian	0	3 (1.0)	5 (1.7)	4 (1.3)	60 (20.6)	67 (21.7)	61 (20.6)	69 (22.5)
Other	7 (2.3)	5 (1.6)	5 (1.7)	9 (3.0)	17 (5.8)	16 (5.2)	15 (5.1)	18 (5.9)
Sex								
Men, n (%)	132 (43.4)	110 (36.2)	134 (44.5)	123 (40.9)	122 (41.9)	133 (43.0)	149 (50.3)	131 (42.8)
Women, n (%)	172 (56.6)	194 (63.8)	167 (55.5)	178 (59.1)	169 (58.1)	176 (57.0)	147 (49.7)	175 (57.2)
Baseline ETDRS BCVA (mean ± SD)	54.0±13.4	55.2±13.2	55.6±13.1	55.7±12.8	53.8±13.5	52.8±13.9	51.6±14.2	51.6±13.9
Proportion of patients with ≥20/40 BCVA, % (n)	4.3% (13)	4.9% (15)	6.3% (19)	6.6% (20)	2.7% (8)	2.6% (8)	5.4% (16)	3.3% (10)
CNV area, mm^2 (mean ± SD)	6.53±5.2	6.59±5.1	6.49±4.5	6.57±5.1	7.59±5.3	8.25±5.8	7.70±5.3	7.75±5.5
Lesion type								
Predominantly classic, n (%)	82 (27.0)	87 (28.6)	81 (26.9)	71 (23.6)	70 (24.1)	72 (23.3)	80 (27.0)	88 (28.8)
Minimally classic, n (%)	101 (33.2)	105 (34.5)	97 (32.2)	110 (36.5)	104 (35.7)	112 (36.2)	103 (34.8)	106 (34.6)
Occult, n (%)	115 (37.8)	110 (36.2)	121 (40.2)	118 (39.2)	116 (39.9)	123 (39.8)	113 (38.2)	110 (35.9)
Patients with juxtafoveal lesions, n (%)	15 (4.9)	13 (4.3)	17 (5.6)	17 (5.6)	20 (6.9)	15 (4.9)	11 (3.7)	14 (4.6)
Lesion size, mm^2 (mean ± SD)	6.99±5.5	6.98±5.4	6.95±4.7	6.89±5.2	8.01±5.7	8.72±6.1	8.17±5.5	8.22±5.9
Central retinal thickness, μm (mean ± SD)	315.3±108.3	313.6±103.4	313.2±106.0	324.4±111.2	325.9±110.9	334.6±119.8	326.5±116.5	342.6±124.0
Baseline NEI VFQ-25 scores (mean ± SD)	71.8±17.2	70.4±16.6	71.1±17.8	69.6±16.8	72.9±19.1	70.3±19.4	74.0±18.2	71.3±19.1

0.5q4 = 0.5 mg monthly; 2q4 = 2 mg monthly; 2q8 = 2 mg every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses; BCVA = best-corrected visual acuity; CNV = choroidal neovascularization; ETDRS = Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study; NEI VFQ-25 = National Eye Institute 25-Item Visual Functioning Questionnaire; SD = standard deviation.

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Table 2. Prespecified Efficacy

	VIEW 1			
	Ranibizumab	*Intravitreal Aflibercept*		
	0.5q4	*2q4*	*0.5q4*	*2q8*
Primary end point				
N (PPS)	269	285	270	265
Proportion maintaining vision (losing <15 ETDRS letters), % (n)	94.4% (254)	95.1% (271)	95.9% (259)	95.1% (252)
N (full analysis set)	304	304	301	301
Proportion maintaining vision (losing <15 ETDRS letters, LOCF), % (n)	93.8% (285)	95.1% (289)	95.0% (286)	94.4% (284)
Secondary end points				
N (full analysis set)	304	304	301	301
Change in ETDRS BCVA (mean ± SD)	8.1±15.3	10.9±13.8	6.9±13.4	7.9±15.0
LS mean difference between IAI and ranibizumab (95% CI)*		3.15 (0.92 to 5.37)	−0.80 (−3.03 to 1.43)	0.26 (−1.97 to 2.49)
Proportion gaining ≥15 ETDRS letters, % (n)	30.9% (94)	37.5% (114)	24.9% (75)	30.6% (92)
LS mean difference between IAI and ranibizumab (95% CI)*		6.58 (−0.98 to 14.14)	−6.00 (−13.17 to 1.16)	−0.36 (−7.74 to 7.03)
Change in CNV area, mm^2 (mean ± SD)	−4.2±5.6	−4.6±5.5	−3.5±5.3	−3.4±6.0
LS mean difference between IAI and ranibizumab (95% CI)*		−0.33 (−1.04 to 0.38)	0.71 (−0.01 to 1.42)	0.86 (0.15–1.58)
Change in total NEI VFQ-25 score (mean ± SD)	4.9±14.0	6.7±13.5	4.5±11.9	5.1±14.7
LS mean difference between IAI and ranibizumab (95% CI)*		1.28 (−0.73 to 3.28)	−0.67 (−2.69 to 1.35)	−0.60 (−2.61 to 1.42)
Exploratory end point				
Change in central retinal thickness, μm (mean ± SD)	−116.8±109.0	−116.5±98.4	−115.6±104.1	−128.5±108.5
Post hoc end point†				
Proportion with dry retina (absence of cystic intraretinal edema and subretinal fluid on OCT), % (n)	63.6% (171)	64.8% (184)	56.7% (148)	63.4% (168)

0.5q4 = 0.5 mg monthly; 2q4 = 2 mg monthly; 2q8 = 2 mg every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses; BCVA = best-corrected visual acuity; aflibercept injection; LOCF = last observation carried forward; LS = least-squares; NEI VFQ-25 = National Eye Institute 25-Item Visual
*95.1% CI for VIEW 1.
†Observed case.

each aflibercept group within the prespecified 10% margin (Fig 2), and the point estimates of the differences in means favoring the aflibercept groups in all cases. All the aflibercept regimens also met the prespecified 7% noninferiority margin in the prespecified integrated analysis combining the 2 VIEW studies, as well as the prespecified 5% margin for clinical equivalence compared with ranibizumab in the individual VIEW studies. Moreover, the results of multiple imputation analyses were consistent with those using the LOCF.

Mean Changes in Best-Corrected Visual Acuity and Other Visual Acuity End Points

The mean change in BCVA was a clinically important secondary end point in both studies. On the basis of the hierarchical testing sequence, only the aflibercept 2q4 group was statistically superior to ranibizumab, and only in VIEW 1, with a gain of +10.9 versus +8.1 letters (Table 2). Small numeric differences between treatment groups in one study at any given timepoint were not reproduced in the other study, suggesting that they reflected random variability even in groups of this size (Fig 3A, B); this interpretation was supported by a prespecified integrated analysis that combined the 2 studies (Fig 3C), showing similar visual acuity scores across the entire 52-week study for all treatment groups. All groups behaved similarly in this integrated analysis (Fig 3C), with rapid increases in mean visual acuity after the first injection followed by incremental gains that were durable and maintained through week 52. Regardless of whether the analysis was by LOCF, by multiple imputations, by assessing completers, or by using actual observed data, intravitreal aflibercept dosed every 2 months achieved a mean visual acuity score within 0.3 letters of monthly ranibizumab in the integrated analysis, with a CI of less than 2 letters (Fig 3C, inset).

In both studies, the secondary end point of proportions of patients gaining ≥15 ETDRS letters from baseline to week 52 was similar in all treatment groups (Table 2), as were other exploratory categoric measures of visual outcome (Appendix 5, available at http://aaojournal.org). Likewise, vision-related quality of life, assessed by the change of total score of the NEI VFQ-25, improved in all groups in both studies (Table 2).

Key Anatomic Measures

In both studies, all groups demonstrated a comparable decrease in the secondary end point of change in area of active CNV

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Outcomes at Week 52

	VIEW 2			
	Ranibizumab	*Intravitreal Aflibercept*		
	0.5q4	*2q4*	*0.5q4*	*2q8*
Primary end point				
N (PPS)	269	274	268	270
Proportion maintaining vision (losing <15 ETDRS letters), % (n)	94.4% (254)	95.6% (262)	96.3% (258)	95.6% (258)
N (full analysis set)	291	309	296	306
Proportion maintaining vision (losing <15 ETDRS letters, LOCF), % (n)	94.8% (276)	94.5% (292)	95.3% (282)	95.4% (292)
Secondary end points				
N (full analysis set)	291	309	296	306
Change in ETDRS BCVA (mean ± SD)	9.4±13.5	7.6±12.6	9.7±14.1	8.9±14.4
LS mean difference between IAI and ranibizumab (95% CI)*		−1.95 (−4.10 to 0.20)	−0.06 (−2.24 to 2.12)	−0.90 (−3.06 to 1.26)
Proportion gaining ≥15 ETDRS letters, % (n)	34.0% (99)	29.4% (91)	34.8% (103)	31.4% (96)
LS mean difference between IAI and ranibizumab (95% CI)*		−4.57 (−12.02 to 2.88)	0.78 (−6.91 to 8.46)	−2.65 (−10.18 to 4.88)
Change in CNV area, mm^2 (mean ± SD)	−4.2±5.9	−6.0±6.1	−4.2±6.1	−5.2±5.9
LS mean difference between IAI and ranibizumab (95% CI)*		−1.18 (−1.98 to −0.38)	0.17 (−0.63 to 0.97)	−0.73 (−1.53 to 0.07)
Change in total NEI VFQ-25 score (mean ± SD)	6.3±14.8	4.5±15.0	5.1±13.7	4.9±14.7
LS mean difference between IAI and ranibizumab (95% CI)*		−2.79 (−4.90 to −0.68)	−0.93 (−3.07 to 1.20)	−1.95 (−4.07 to 0.17)
Exploratory end point				
Change in central retinal thickness, μm (mean ± SD)	−138.5±122.2	−156.8±122.8	−129.8±114.8	−149.2±119.7
Post hoc end point†				
Proportion with dry retina (absence of cystic intraretinal edema and subretinal fluid on OCT), % (n)	60.4% (162)	80.3% (220)	63.9% (170)	71.9% (197)

CNV = choroidal neovascularization; CI = confidence interval; ETDRS = Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study; IAI = intravitreal Functioning Questionnaire; OCT = optical coherence tomography; PPS = per protocol set; SD = standard deviation.

(Table 2). Likewise, all aflibercept groups in both studies had reductions in central retinal thickness similar to those for monthly ranibizumab as assessed by OCT, with a large and rapid reduction evident by week 4 (with retinal thickness approaching normal levels) that was maintained to week 52 (Table 2, Fig 4). Minor fluctuations in central retinal thickness were seen in the 2q8 group after sham injections in the VIEW 2 study; these fluctuations attenuated over time, starting at 17 μm and decreasing to 8 μm over the year, with no apparent negative impact on visual acuity outcomes.

Because of the inability of other regimens in the CATT[13] to match the retinal thickness and retinal fluid improvements seen with monthly ranibizumab, a post hoc analysis was performed to determine the percentage of patients who had fluid-free retinas, which were defined, on OCT, by the absence of both cystic intraretinal edema and subretinal fluid. All intravitreal aflibercept groups were similar to the monthly ranibizumab group in terms of this end point, with numerically higher percentages of dry retinas seen in the 2q4 and 2q8 regimens largely driven by VIEW 2 (Table 2; Appendix 6, available at http://aaojournal.org). Integrated analysis combining both studies for proportions of patients with dry retinas for ranibizumab and the aflibercept regimens of 2q4, 0.5q4, and 2q8 showed percentages of 62.0%, 72.4%, 60.3%, and 67.7%, respectively.

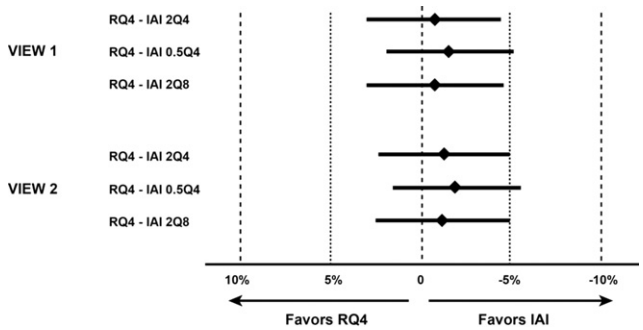

Figure 2. Difference in proportions of patients who maintained vision (losing <15 Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study [ETDRS] letters) at week 52 in the VIEW studies (per protocol set [PPS]). The *diamond symbol* denotes the difference between the treatment arms, and the *horizontal bars* indicate 95% confidence interval (CI) range. The CI within the left 10% (*dashed vertical lines*) indicates that all intravitreal aflibercept arms were noninferior to ranibizumab. The CI within the left 5% (*dotted vertical line*) indicates clinical equivalence to ranibizumab. The last observation carried forward (LOCF) was used for imputing the missing values. RQ4 = 0.5 mg ranibizumab monthly; 0.5Q4 = 0.5 mg IAI monthly; 2Q4 = 2 mg IAI monthly; 2Q8 = 2 mg IAI every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses; IAI = intravitreal aflibercept injection.

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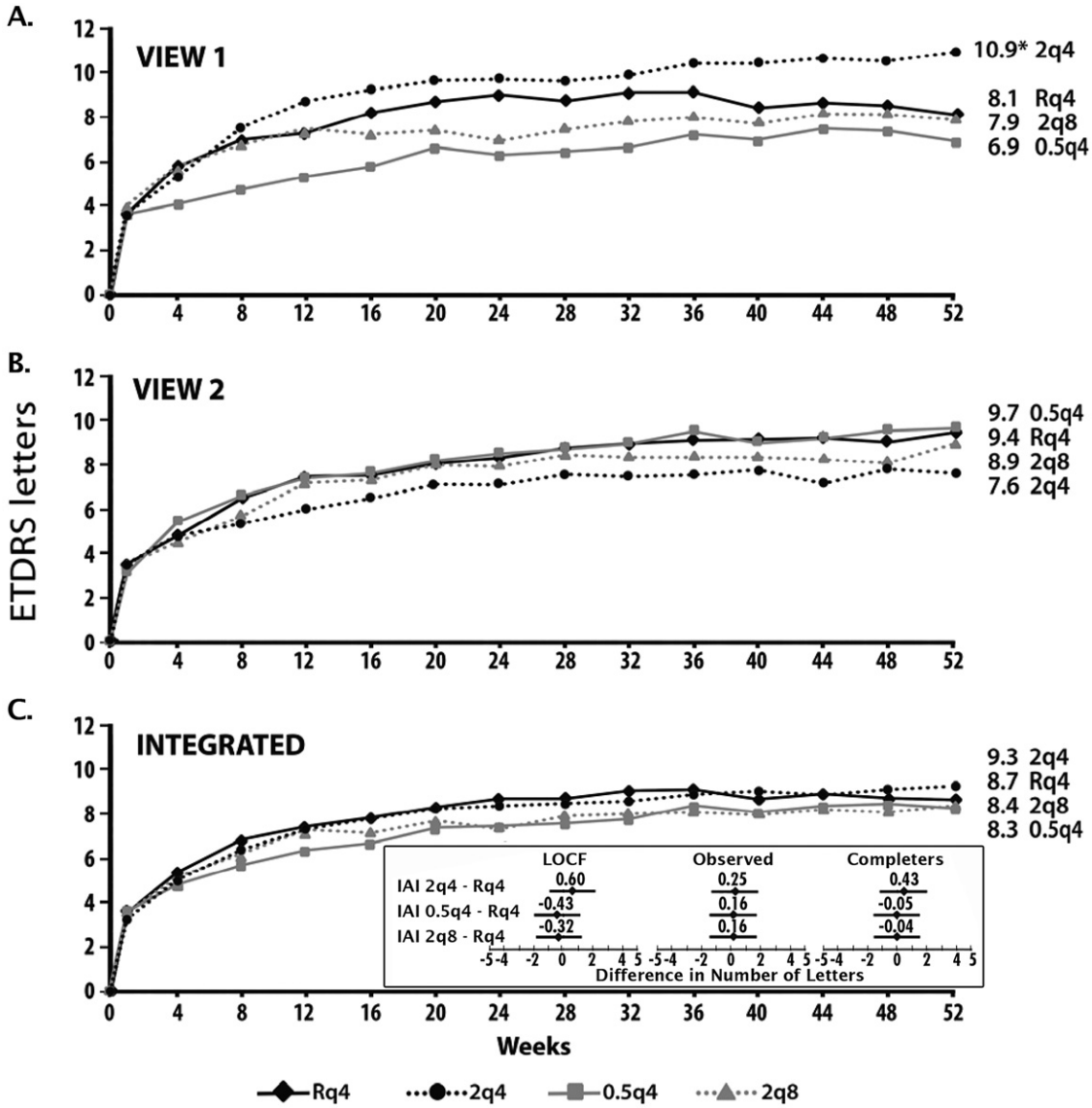

Figure 3. Mean change in best-corrected visual acuity (BCVA) from baseline to week 52 in the individual VIEW studies and in the integrated analysis. Values in the line graphs refer to mean changes in the number of letters from baseline at week 52. Only the intravitreal aflibercept 2q4 arm in VIEW 1 was significantly different from ranibizumab (*P = 0.005 for the difference). The panel inset (integrated analysis) shows the difference in visual acuity between each intravitreal aflibercept arm and ranibizumab (least-square mean with 95% confidence interval [CI]) at week 52, using 3 different analyses: by last observation carried forward (LOCF), using observed case data, and by assessing completers. Rq4 = 0.5 mg ranibizumab monthly; 0.5q4 = 0.5 mg IAI monthly; 2q4 = 2 mg IAI monthly; 2q8 = 2 mg IAI every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses; ETDRS = Early Treatment Diabetic Retinopathy Study; IAI = intravitreal aflibercept injection.

Safety

Intravitreal aflibercept was generally well tolerated and had a profile of ocular treatment-emergent adverse experiences, including serious ocular adverse events, similar to those for monthly ranibizumab (Table 3; Appendix 7, available at http://aaojournal.org). Differences were noted in the prespecified analyses of intraocular pressure: Fewer patients treated with aflibercept had increases in intraocular pressure over the 52 weeks of the VIEW 1 and VIEW 2 studies (Appendix 7, available at http://aaojournal.org). There were few ocular injection–related treatment-emergent serious adverse events in the study eye. The combined data for both studies showed a rate of events/1000 injections of 1.1, 0.8, 0.1, and 0.2 for the ranibizumab 0.5q4 and intravitreal aflibercept 2q4, 0.5q4, and 2q8 groups, respectively. These events included eye disorders, endophthalmitis, procedural complications, and increased intraocular pressure.

There was a similar overall incidence of systemic (nonocular) adverse events (Appendix 7, available at http://aaojournal.org), serious systemic adverse events, specific arterial thromboembolic end points as set forth by the Anti-Platelet Trialists' Collaboration, and deaths between intravitreal aflibercept and ranibizumab (Table 3). Among the aflibercept treatment groups, there was no evidence of a dose-response for adverse events: The group with the highest exposure, the aflibercept 2q4 group, generally had the lowest rates of adverse events. There was little to no immunogenicity associated with intravitreal aflibercept (Appendix 8, available at http://aaojournal.org).

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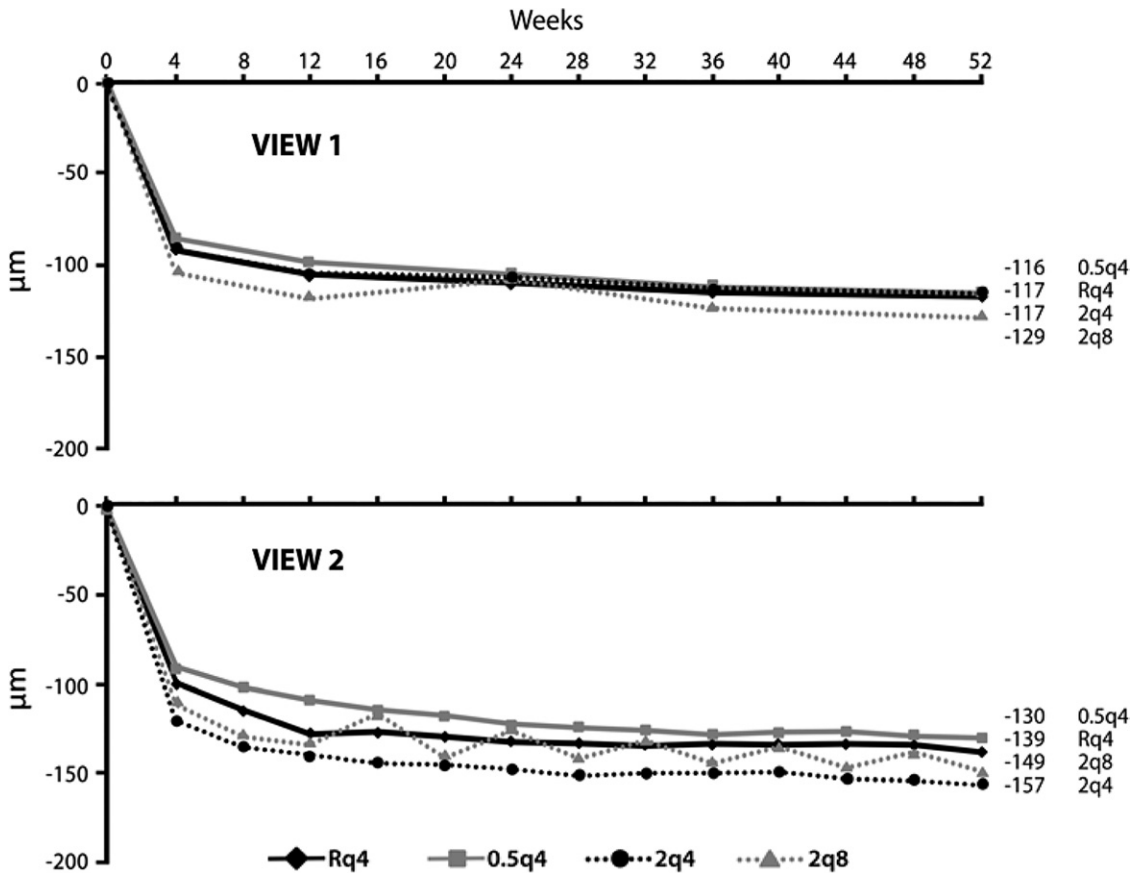

Figure 4. Mean change from baseline in central retinal thickness (full analysis set). As described in the "Materials and Methods" section, in VIEW 1, optical coherence tomography (OCT) was performed at screening, at the treatment initiation visit, and at weeks 4, 12, 24, 36, and 52 (and was optional at the investigators' discretion at other study visits). In VIEW 2, OCT was performed at every study visit. The last observation carried forward (LOCF) was used for imputing the missing values. Rq4 = 0.5 mg ranibizumab monthly; 0.5q4 = 0.5 mg intravitreal aflibercept injection (IAI) monthly; 2q4 = 2 mg IAI monthly; 2q8 = 2 mg IAI every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses.

Discussion

We have described 2 large and similarly designed clinical trials involving more than 2400 patients with neovascular AMD. In both trials, all 3 aflibercept treatment regimens (including the every-2-month regimen after 3 initial monthly loading doses) were statistically noninferior to monthly ranibizumab in preventing moderate visual acuity loss at 1 year, meeting the primary outcome of the trials; all the aflibercept regimens also met the stricter margin of 5% for clinical equivalence compared with monthly ranibizumab. In terms of mean change in BCVA over time, all aflibercept regimens behaved similarly to monthly ranibizumab, with rapid increases after the first treatment followed by incremental gains that were durable and maintained through week 52. Mean visual acuity scores were within 1 letter of each other at week 52 in the prespecified integrated analysis combining the 2 studies; of note, aflibercept dosed every 2 months achieved a visual acuity score within 0.3 letters of monthly ranibizumab, with a CI of less than 2 letters, regardless of the analysis set used. Because the CATT[13] highlighted the inability of other regimens, including monthly bevacizumab and PRN ranibizumab or bevacizumab, to match the retinal thickness and retinal fluid improvements seen with monthly ranibizumab, it is notable that all 3 aflibercept regimens behaved similarly to monthly ranibizumab in terms of these anatomic measures.

Because of the large treatment burden, extensive efforts have been devoted toward developing an optimized treatment paradigm that avoids the need for monthly injections or monitoring visits. The CATT and HARBOR studies used noninferiority margins of change from baseline BCVA of 5 letters and 4 letters, respectively, to evaluate the efficacy of PRN regimens (Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci 2012;53:E-Abstract 3677).[13] The CATT[13] generated much interest, in part because it showed that PRN ranibizumab and bevacizumab regimens approached the visual acuity outcomes achieved with monthly ranibizumab; however, these PRN regimens produced numerically smaller gains in BCVA at 52 weeks (by 1.7–2.6 letters) with poorer anatomic outcomes. Switching from a monthly to a PRN regimen during the second year of the CATT significantly worsened visual and anatomic out-

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Table 3. Serious Ocular Adverse Events in the Study Eye and Other Key Nonocular Events Occurring in ≥0.5%* of Patients in Any Study Arm

	VIEW 1				VIEW 2			
	Ranibizumab	*Intravitreal Aflibercept*			*Ranibizumab*	*Intravitreal Aflibercept*		
	0.5q4	*2q4*	*0.5q4*	*2q8*	*0.5q4*	*2q4*	*0.5q4*	*2q8*
N (safety analysis set)	304	304	304	303	291	309	297	307
Patients with at least 1 ocular SAE, n (%)	10 (3.3)	7 (2.3)	6 (2.0)	3 (1.0)	9 (3.1)	6 (1.9)	5 (1.7)	9 (2.9)
Serious ocular adverse event, n (%)								
Endophthalmitis	3 (1.0)	3 (1.0)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Visual acuity reduced	2 (0.7)	1 (0.3)	2 (0.7)	0	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	5 (1.6)
Retinal hemorrhage	2 (0.7)	0	0	2 (0.7)	1 (0.3)	2 (0.6)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)
Posterior capsule opacification	—	—	—	—	2 (0.7)	0	0	0
Serious systemic (or nonocular) adverse event	57 (18.8)	40 (13.2)	50 (16.4)	51 (16.8)	26 (8.9)	36 (11.7)	37 (12.5)	38 (12.4)
APTC ATE events								
Any APTC ATE event	5 (1.6)	2 (0.7)	7 (2.3)	6 (2.0)	5 (1.7)	4 (1.3)	5 (1.7)	8 (2.6)
Vascular death	1 (0.3)	0	1 (0.3)	4 (1.3)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	2 (0.7)	1 (0.3)
Nonfatal myocardial infarction	4 (1.3)	1 (0.3)	4 (1.3)	1 (0.3)	2 (0.7)	2 (0.6)	2 (0.7)	5 (1.6)
Nonfatal stroke	0	1 (0.3)	2 (0.7)	1 (0.3)	2 (0.7)	1 (0.3)	1 (0.3)	2 (0.7)
Any AE of hypertension	29 (9.5)	25 (8.2)	26 (8.6)	31 (10.2)	29 (10.0)	31 (10.0)	22 (7.4)	28 (9.1)
SAEs of interest occurring in any patient								
Venous thromboembolic event	1 (0.3%)	0	1 (0.3%)	0	0	0	0	0
Congestive heart failure event	2 (0.7%)	1 (0.3%)	2 (0.7%)	3 (1.0%)	1 (0.3%)	0	0	1 (0.3%)
GI perforation or fistula event	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)
Nonocular hemorrhagic event	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)	3 (1.0%)	3 (1.0%)	0	2 (0.6%)	0	1 (0.3%)
Delayed wound healing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

0.5q4 = 0.5 mg monthly; 2q4 = 2 mg monthly; 2q8 = 2 mg every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses; AE = adverse event; APTC ATE = Anti-platelet Trialists' Collaboration Arteriothrombolic Event; GI = gastrointestinal; SAE = serious adverse event.
*For SAEs of interest, occurrence in any patient is reported.

comes and resulted in a decrease in the proportion of patients without retinal fluid.[14] The results from the HARBOR study showed that PRN regimens of ranibizumab (including a higher 2 mg dose) did not achieve noninferiority compared with monthly ranibizumab (Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci 2012;53:E-Abstract 3677). Moreover, the PRN regimens in both CATT and HARBOR still required mandatory monthly visits, during which treatment decisions had to be made largely on the basis of anatomic measures. The demonstration that monthly aflibercept provides similar efficacy and safety as the current approved standard of monthly ranibizumab is important, but the finding that remarkably similar improvement in vision and anatomic measures can be achieved with less than monthly intravitreal aflibercept injections and without requiring monthly monitoring visits provides an important advance for both patients and their treating physicians. The FDA has approved intravitreal aflibercept injection for AMD and recommended the regimen of 2 mg once every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses (Eylea [package insert]. Tarrytown, NY: Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc; 2011. Available at: http://www.regeneron.com/Eylea/eylea-fpi.pdf. Accessed August 8, 2012). This approval was based on the evaluation that this regimen provided the best benefit/risk; the approved label notes that aflibercept can be dosed as often as every 4 weeks, although additional efficacy was not reported with such frequent dosing. By halving the need for monthly visits, the every-2-month regimen of aflibercept may markedly decrease the treatment burden experienced by patients and their families. Less frequent injections also should provide an ocular safety benefit. Although the VIEW studies were not powered to see differences in rare but serious intraocular complications (e.g., endophthalmitis and retinal detachment), it is likely that fewer injections may substantially decrease the cumulative population risk of such events, considering that millions of injections are given each year.

After the 1-year primary end point of VIEW 1/VIEW 2 presented in this article, all treatment groups' dosing intervals were changed to a common protocol of modified quarterly dosing with their originally randomized dose and drug (all patients were monitored monthly and received a minimum of dosing every 12 weeks with interim as-needed monthly intravitreal injections). The results of this second year were recently presented (Invest Ophthalmol Vis Sci 2012;53:E-Abstract 6962) and reveal 81.6% to 85.7% patient retention in all groups with comparable visual acuity maintenance (91%–92%) in each group at the 96-week time point. The total number of active injections (baseline to week 96) was 16.0 to 16.2 in the monthly intravitreal aflibercept groups, 16.5 in the monthly ranibizumab group, and 11.2 in the original 2q8 group. The finding that visual acuity maintenance can be achieved for up to 96 weeks in the 2q8 group with similar gains in BCVA compared with ranibizumab despite more than 5 fewer doses is encouraging and implies that the treatment burden of neovascular AMD may be meaningfully reduced with this 2q8 intravitreal aflibercept regimen.

The sustained durability of intravitreal aflibercept as demonstrated by the every-2-month regimen is consistent

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with the rationale that a higher binding affinity could lead to increased durability.[17] It is encouraging that the increased affinity of intravitreal aflibercept did not result in an observed increase in ocular or systemic adverse events. In the VIEW 1 and VIEW 2 trials, no differences in systemic or ocular safety were noted between any of the doses or dosing regimens of intravitreal aflibercept. Systemic exposure of aflibercept injected intravitreally is extremely low (Eylea [package insert]. Tarrytown, NY: Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc; 2011. Available at: http://www.regeneron.com/Eylea/eylea-fpi.pdf. Accessed August 8, 2012). After intravitreal administration of 2 mg per eye of aflibercept to patients with wet AMD, the mean maximum concentration of free aflibercept in the plasma was 0.02 μg/ml (range, 0–0.054 μg/ml) and was attained in 1 to 3 days. The free aflibercept plasma concentrations were undetectable 2 weeks post-dosing in all patients. Aflibercept did not accumulate in plasma when administered as repeated doses intravitreally every 4 weeks. It is estimated that after intravitreal administration of 2 mg to patients, the mean maximum plasma concentration of free aflibercept is more than 100-fold lower than the concentration of aflibercept required to half-maximally bind systemic VEGF.

In conclusion, intravitreal aflibercept dosed monthly or every 2 months after 3 initial monthly doses resulted in similar visual and anatomic outcomes as ranibizumab dosed monthly, as well as similar safety and tolerability. Intravitreal aflibercept dosed every 2 months has the potential to provide patients, their families, and clinicians the opportunity for the optimal vision gains and anatomic disease control they have come to expect from monthly ranibizumab, with a substantially decreased treatment and compliance burden, and a lower cumulative risk of injection-related adverse events.

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Footnotes and Financial Disclosures

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