

“Development of IPF drugs: a slow process fraught with failures”

Not long ago, doctors had no proven treatment options for their IPF patients. Today, Canadian IPF patients can be treated with Esbriet (pirfenidone), and encouraging clinical data suggests a second option, nintenamib, may soon be available. Part of the reason why novel drugs are so slow to become available to patients is that drug development takes significantly longer today than it did in the past. According to Dr. Luca Richeldi, Professor of Respiratory Medicine at University of Southampton in the United Kingdom, only one of every 5,000-10,000 drugs discovered eventually gets approved; a process that can take up to 15 years.

In recent years, many potential drugs have not been approved due to safety concerns. Others seemed promising in animal studies, but subsequently failed to show any impact in humans. “Even when you start with the most promising preclinical data, when you get into the IPF patient population, the results may be the opposite of what you expected,” noted Dr. Richeldi.