

NEWSLETTER

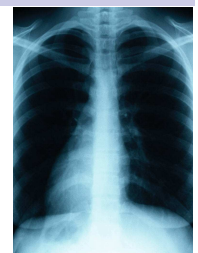


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INHALED STEROIDS AND RISK OF PNEUMONIA IN COPD ^{1,7}

Inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) have been associated with an increased risk of pneumonia in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Cochrane reviewed the recent evidence on this risk with respect to the magnitude and how the risk compares between different ICS. Cochrane concluded that budesonide and fluticasone (monotherapy or in combination with a long-acting beta agonist) can be associated with an increased risk of serious adverse pneumonia events, but neither significantly affected mortality compared with controls. Comparing risk with budesonide with fluticasone, no statistical difference in serious pneumonias, mortality or serious adverse events was seen between the two ICS. However, the risk of *any* pneumonia (i.e. less serious cases dealt with in the community) was higher with fluticasone than with budesonide. The authors acknowledge that definitions and methods of diagnosis used in studies are a potential confounding factor in their comparison and that therefore this finding should be interpreted with caution.



Action

Healthcare professionals should be aware of the potential risk of side effects (including pneumonia) of inhaled corticosteroids in people treated for COPD and be prepared to discuss these with patients.

CAUTION WITH RELVAR[®] ELLIPTA[®] DOSING ²⁻⁶

Relvar[®] Ellipta[®] is a new once daily combination inhaler for the management of asthma and COPD. It contains fluticasone as the furoate salt and the novel long-acting beta-2 agonist vilanterol. It is available in two strengths (92 micrograms / 22 micrograms and 184 micrograms / 22 micrograms). HSCB Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team would like to highlight the following points to prescribers when considering prescribing Relvar[®] Ellipta[®]:

1. The *furoate* salt of fluticasone is significantly more 'potent' than fluticasone *propionate* that prescribers will be more familiar with: 92 micrograms of fluticasone furoate once daily is approximately equivalent to fluticasone propionate 250 micrograms twice a day (500 micrograms / day). No studies have been conducted on dose comparison to inhaled beclomethasone.
2. There is no low-dose Relvar[®] Ellipta[®] on the market, therefore it is not possible to 'step-down' using this device.
3. Commentators have raised concerns that the blue cover of the Relvar[®] Ellipta[®] device and the similarity of the brand name to the word "reliever" could lead to patients using the product 'as required' rather than once daily. It should be noted that in Northern Ireland there have been no actual reports where there has been confusion in patients thus far reported to the HSCB; this article is to highlight the potential for risk when prescribing.

Action

- Attention should be paid to the dose equivalence if prescribing Relvar[®] Ellipta[®].
- If the inhaler is used, careful counselling and advice should be provided to patients.

CICLOSPORIN EYE DROPS AVAILABILITY

There is currently a supply problem with ciclosporin eye drops 0.06%, for both primary and secondary care. The product is an unlicensed special and is usually available from Moorefields Eye Hospital. It is not known when this supply problem will be resolved. As an alternative, the US product Restasis[®] (ciclosporin 0.05% eye drops) is available via specialist-importing companies such as IDIS. Please note Restasis[®] is licensed in the US but not in the UK. Patients attending the Mater hospital for eye surgery will be dispensed an initial supply of Restasis[®], with further supplies to be obtained directly from a specialist-importing company.



Action

- GPs should issue prescriptions in the usual way.
- Community pharmacies can purchase ciclosporin 0.05% eye drops directly from a specialist-importing company.

NITROFURANTOIN 50MG CAPSULE AVAILABILITY

Historically the only available nitrofurantoin 50mg capsule was the branded product Macrochantin[®]. The manufacturer (Amdipharm Mercury Company Limited) has recently discontinued this branded product and has launched a new generic version of nitrofurantoin 50mg capsules. The main wholesalers in Northern Ireland have confirmed that they are now stocking the new generic nitrofurantoin 50mg capsules which can be ordered by community pharmacists.

Action

Nitrofurantoin 50mg capsules are still the preferred cost-effective choices option in preference to the equivalent tablet formulation.

NEW NICE GUIDANCE

NICE Technology Appraisal 306: Pixantrone monotherapy for treating multiply relapsed or refractory aggressive non-Hodgkin's B cell lymphoma <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA306>

NICE Technology Appraisal 303: Teriflunomide for treating relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA303>

For other NICE clinical guidelines and technology appraisals, please refer to the Northern Ireland Formulary website section on Managed Entry: <http://niformulary.hscni.net/ManagedEntry/NICECG/Pages/default.aspx>

NORTHERN IRELAND MANAGED ENTRY DECISIONS

The following medicines were considered in April and May as part of the Northern Ireland Managed Entry process:

Primary care and secondary care

- Adapalene + benzoyl peroxide (Epiduo[®])
- Aripiprazole (Abilify Maintena[®])
- Canagliflozin (Invokana[®])
- Fluticasone furoate/ vilanterol (Relvar Ellipta[®])

Secondary care

- Afatinib (Giotrif[®])
- Aflibercept (Zaltrap[®])
- Alemtuzumab (Lemtrada[®])
- Azithromycin (Zedbac[®])
- Bortezomib (Velcade[®])

- Certolizumab (Cimzia[®])
- Cobicistat (Tybost[®])
- Degarelix (Firmagon[®]) injection, monthly
- Dolutegravir (Trivicay[®])
- Emtricitabine + rilpivirine + tenofovir (Eviplera[®])
- Enzalutamide (Xtandi[®])
- Lipegfilgrastim (Lonquex[®])
- Macitentan (Opsumit[®])
- Pemetrexed (Alimta[®])
- Rituximab (MabThera[®])
- Ustekinumab (Stelara[®])

For details of the outcomes, please refer to the Managed Entry section of the Northern Ireland Formulary website: <http://niformulary.hscni.net/ManagedEntry/MEDecisions/Pages/default.aspx>

References

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2. Capstick TGD et al. Our concerns with Relvar Ellipta. Pharm J, 19/02/2014.
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6. DTB. ▼ Relvar Ellipta for COPD. DTB, 2014;52(6)66-69.
7. NICE. COPD: further evidence on the risk of pneumonia with inhaled fluticasone or budesonide. Medicines Evidence Commentary, June 2014.

This newsletter has been produced for GPs and Pharmacists by the Regional Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team.

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