Tablet Press

The prescribing newsletter for GPs, nurses and pharmacists in Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust

Issue 47 **August 2010**

- **MHRA updates rosiglitazone warnings and issues CAS alert**

New data have been published that raise concern about an increased risk of cardiovascular adverse effects of rosiglitazone. These data add substantially to existing evidence and point towards an increased cardiovascular risk with rosiglitazone compared with both placebo and with pioglitazone.

There is currently an ongoing Europe-wide review of the risks and benefits of rosiglitazone due to these concerns. European Medicines Agency update on ongoing benefit-risk review of Avandia and Avandamet.

While the European review is ongoing, healthcare professionals are reminded to closely observe the current contraindications and monitoring requirements for rosiglitazone, and to consider alternative treatments where appropriate.

Further information for healthcare professionals has been circulated via the Central Alerting System (CAS).

Information on rosiglitazone and cardiovascular risk circulated via CAS (97Kb)

Please see the accompanying Tablet Press Extra for further information about alternative choices to rosiglitazone.

- **Valproate preparations**

Valproate is the generic term applied to Valproic Acid, its salts and its esters.
In the UK there are licensed preparations containing:

- **Sodium Valproate** e.g. “Epilim” enteric-coated and crushable tablets, sugar-free liquid and syrup, “Episenta” capsules and sachets containing modified-release granules
- **Valproic Acid** e.g. “Convulex” enteric-coated capsules
- **Sodium Valproate with Valproic Acid** e.g. “Epilim Chrono” modified release tablets and “Epilim Chronosphere” modified release granules. The strength is given as the equivalent sodium valproate.
- **Valproate Semisodium** e.g. “Depakote” gastro-resistant tablets. The strength is given as the equivalent valproic acid.

The Epilim range and Convulex are licensed for use in epilepsy. “Depakote” is NOT licensed for use in epilepsy but for the “acute treatment of a manic episode associated with bipolar disorder”. When prescribing or dispensing, or when interpreting a prescription request from secondary care, please be careful to establish which **branded product** the patient is supposed to have. NICE advises that generic switching of valproate preparations is not normally recommended due to the clinical implications of possible variations in plasma concentrations.

- **Citalopram drops bioavailability**

Citalopram drops should only be prescribed where appropriate for people who cannot swallow the tablets and need to continue this antidepressant. Prescribers need to be aware that the doses of the tablet and drop formulations are not directly equivalent. It is suggested because of this that the drop formulation is **prescribed by the number of drops required** and not in millilitres.
Citalopram oral drops have approximately 25% increased bioavailability compared to tablets. The tablet corresponds to the number of drops as follows:

Tablets / Dose equivalent	Drops	Prescribe as
10 mg	8 mg	4 drops
20 mg	16 mg	8 drops
30 mg	24 mg	12 drops
40 mg	32 mg	16 drops
60 mg	48 mg	24 drops

Further information can be found in the Summary of Product Characteristics at www.medicines.org.uk or in a current edition of the BNF by the formulation details.

This edition is also available on HNN (Health Network Northants)
http://nww.northants.nhs.uk/Display/Dynamic.jsp?topid=14070&lhsid=514&oid=2854&currentid=2854

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