

PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS

**Pegasys injection**

COMPOSITION: Peginterferon alfa-2a 180µg/0.5ml.

PRESENTATION: Prefilled syringe.

ACTION: Immunostimulating agent.

INDICATIONS: Treatment of histologically proven chronic hepatitis C in adults with elevated transaminases and who are positive for serum hepatitis C virus (HCV)-RNA, including patients with compensated cirrhosis. The optimal way to use peginterferon alfa-2a is in combination with ribavirin. Monotherapy is indicated mainly in cases of intolerance or contraindication to ribavirin.

DOSAGE: Recommended dose is 180µg once weekly in combination with oral ribavirin or as monotherapy. See SPC for dose of ribavirin.

MAJOR CAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Pegasys is contraindicated in the following: autoimmune hepatitis; severe hepatic dysfunction or decompensated cirrhosis of the liver; neonates and children up to three years old; history of severe cardiac disease, including unstable and uncontrolled cardiac disease in the previous six months; pre-existing severe psychiatric condition or a history of severe psychiatric disorder, mainly depression; pregnancy and lactation. Safety and efficacy have not been established in patients under the age of 18 years.

LEGAL CATEGORY: POM.

NET PRICE: 4 £568.

CONTACT DETAILS: Roche Products, 40 Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 3AY. Tel 0800 328 1629, fax 01707 390 378.

See SPC for further details.



**Caspofungin infusion**

COMPOSITION: Caspofungin (as acetate) 50mg and 70mg.

PRESENTATION: Powder for solution for infusion.

CLASS: Antimycotic.

INDICATIONS: Treatment of invasive aspergillosis in adult patients who are refractory to or intolerant of amphotericin B, lipid formulations of amphotericin B and/or itraconazole.

DOSAGE: Single loading dose of 70mg should be administered on day one and 50mg daily thereafter.

In patients weighing more than 80kg, 70mg daily is recommended after the initial loading dose.

MAJOR CAUTIONS: Concomitant use of caspofungin with ciclosporin should be limited to those patients for whom the potential benefit outweighs the potential risk. Standard monitoring of tacrolimus blood concentrations and appropriate tacrolimus dosage adjustments are mandatory. When co-administering inducers of metabolic enzymes, an increase in the daily dose of caspofungin to 70mg should be considered. Caspofungin should not be used during pregnancy unless clearly necessary. Women receiving caspofungin should not breast-feed.

SIDE EFFECTS: Common (>1 per cent) undesirable effects are fever, headache, abdominal pain, nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, elevated liver enzyme levels, anaemia, phlebitis, infused vein complication, rash and pruritus.

LEGAL CATEGORY: POM.

NET PRICE: 50mg 1 £327.67, 70mg 1 £416.78.

CONTACT DETAILS: Merck Sharp & Dohme, Hertford Road, Hoddeston, Hertfordshire EN11 9BU. Tel 01992 467272, fax 01992 450188. See SPC for further details.

SUPPLY PROBLEMS

**Molipaxin liquid**

Molipaxin (trazodone hydrochloride) liquid, pack size 120ml, is back in stock (Aventis Pharma). The first batch expires in December. The company will collect any stock that goes out of date and requests that stockholding is kept to a minimum. Queries should be directed to the company's customer services department (tel 0870 513 3347).

**Potassium effervescent tablets**

Potassium effervescent tablets, pack size 56, are back in stock (Alpharma).

DISCONTINUED PRODUCTS

**Sanofi-Synthelabo products**

The following products have been discontinued (Sanofi-Synthelabo):

- Diprospan (oxybutynin hydrochloride) 2.5mg and 5mg tablets, pack size 21. The 84-tablet pack size remains available.
- Monit (isosorbide mononitrate) 10mg and 20mg tablets, pack size 100. The 56-tablet pack size remains available.
- Pyrogastone (carbenoxolone) liquid, pack size 500ml
- Solian (amisulpride) 50mg and 200mg tablets, pack size 90. The

Schering Award



The College of Pharmacy Practice's 2001 Schering Award was presented to Jeanette Howe, deputy chief pharmacist, Department of Health, at a celebratory dinner on 10 July. The award is presented annually for outstanding contribution to pharmacy practice. The picture shows (front row, left to right) Dr Angela Alexander, chairman of the college, Hazel Blears, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, Mrs Howe and Paul Woodward, Schering's managing director, who presented the award. In the background are previous award winners and guests.

60-tablet pack size remains available.

*The Journal* last week (p43) should have read: "My key message is that it is not advisable to use HRT in order to prevent osteoporosis or cardiovascular problems. We need to be cautious with these preparations."

COUNTER MEDICINES

**Imodium Instants**

Imodium Instants (loperamide hydrochloride) 2mg tablets in a melt-in-the-mouth formulation have been launched (Johnson & Johnson MSD Consumer Pharmaceuticals); retail price, 6 £3.75. Legal category: general sale list.

**Joe Wright**

In the obituary notice for Joe Wright last week (p84) his address was wrongly given as 16 Wynchgate rather than 116.

CORRECTIONS

**HRT trial**

The comment from Dr Brian Curwain, chief pharmacist at New Forest Primary Care Trust, reported in

**Beta-blocker**

The paper on left ventricular systolic dysfunction (p7, 29 June, p911) wrongly stated that carvedilol is the only beta-blocker with a licence for initiation out of the hospital setting. Bisoprolol is the only beta-blocker with such a licence.

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