

PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS

Topamax

Topamax (topiramate) has been licensed as monotherapy for newly diagnosed epilepsy in adults and children over six years old. This is in addition to its authorisation for adjunctive treatment of epilepsy. The efficacy and safety of conversion from adjunctive therapy to Topamax monotherapy has not been demonstrated. Treatment should be started at a low dose followed by titration to an effective dose. It is not necessary to monitor topiramate plasma concentrations to optimise treatment. The initial dose for adults and children over 16 years is 25mg nightly for a week. The daily dose is then incrementally increased by 25mg or 50mg administered in two divided doses at one or two week intervals. The recommended initial target dose is 100mg daily and the maximum recommended daily dose is 400mg. In children aged six to 16 years the initial dose is 0.5 to 1mg/kg nightly for the first week. The dosage is then increased at one or two week intervals by increments of 0.5 to 1mg/kg/day in two divided doses. The recommended target dose range is 3 to 6mg/kg/day. See SPC.

Mucodyne syrup

Mucodyne syrup (carbocisteine 250mg/5ml) has been transferred from Aventis to Beacon Pharmaceuticals (customer services department 0870 513 3347). All orders outstanding from Aventis have been cancelled. Orders should be placed via the nominated distributor Distribiphar (fax 0870 513 3329). Mucodyne paediatric syrup remains available via Aventis. Medical information for Mucodyne capsules and syrup is available on 01892 506958.

SPC CHANGES

Tazocin

A warning that all patients being treated with methotrexate should have their serum methotrexate levels monitored during concomitant treatment with piperacillin has been added to the SPC for Tazocin (piperacillin sodium/tazobactam sodium). Previously, it was believed that only patients on high doses of methotrexate needed monitoring. The SPC also now warns that Tazocin can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea and that overdosage can cause neuromuscular excitability or convulsion, particularly in patients with renal failure. Excessive serum concentrations of piperacillin and tazobactam can be reduced by haemodialysis. Other additions to

the SPC include incompatibility with lactated Ringer's solution and notes that Tazocin should not be reconstituted with bacteriostatic water for injections or diluted in Dextran 6 per cent plus 0.9 per cent sodium chloride solution. See SPC.

DISCONTINUED PRODUCTS

Zinamide

Merck Sharp & Dohme has stopped producing Zinamide (pyrazinamide) 500mg tablets for supply in the UK. Once stocks are exhausted, pyrazinamide can be obtained through international pharmacies or IDIS (tel 020 8410 0700).

AWARDS

Thrombosis Quorum

The Thrombosis Quorum, an educational group supported by AstraZeneca, is inviting applications for its 2003 Thrombosis Leaders of the Future awards. Awards of up to £4,000 are available to support travel, education or services related to thrombosis management or prevention in four categories: clinical management, basic science or laboratory-based research, primary care, and patient focus. Runner-up prizes of £500 will also be awarded. Entries of between 2,000 and 3,000 words are sought by 31 October. Application forms can be obtained from Camilla Bull, TQ secretariat, PO Box 4253, London W1A 6ST (tel 020 7318 8313, e-mail secretariat@thrombosisquorum.co.uk).

Medicines management

The United Kingdom Clinical Pharmacy Association is seeking applications for its 2003 Merck Pharmaceuticals medicines management award. An award of £1,500 is available for work already undertaken in the areas of medicines management or pharmaceutical care. The winner will be invited to present his or her work at the UKCPA's autumn symposium and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists mid-year clinical meeting in December. Submissions should not exceed 1,000 words. Details can be obtained by contacting the UKCPA on 0116 277 6999.

Palliative care

The United Kingdom Clinical Pharmacy Association is inviting applications from UKCPA members for the 2003 Napp Palliative Care Award. The winner will present his or her work at the UKCPA's autumn symposium in Blackpool in November. The deadline for submissions is 15 August. Full details

can be obtained by contacting the UKCPA office on 0116 277 6999.

WANTS LIST

Iraq aid appeal

Murtaza Gulamhusein and Asaad Shallal want to hear from manufacturers, wholesalers, NHS trusts and individual pharmacists who are able to donate specific items to hospitals in Iraq. For a list of items required contact curriepharm@AOL.com or asaadshallal@hotmail.com.

FUTURE EVENTS

Clinical pharmacy

European Society of Clinical Pharmacy symposium on "Pharmacist in the health care team — standards of practice and systems of care", 29 October–1 November, Valencia, Spain. Further information available at www.escp.nl or from the ESCP international office (tel +32 27 43 15 42).

ABOUT PEOPLE

Charity cricket match

Pharmacists and pharmacy staff from the H. A. McParland chain raised almost £1,000 in a charity cricket match on 4 May. The event, along with raffles and prize draws, was organised by pharmacist Bobby Mehta. The money is being donated to the Berkshire County Blind Society and the Buckinghamshire Association for Blind and Partially Sighted People.

International Student Award

Karen Cheah, a final year pharmacy student at Nottingham University, was chosen as a finalist in this year's British Council's International Stu-

dent Awards. Entrants were asked to write a letter home about their experiences in the United Kingdom. Ms Cheah, who is from Malaysia, wrote about her interests outside work which include ju-jitsu, rock-climbing, philosophy, art and photography. She also mentioned summer experiences working in a community pharmacy and a hospital.

RESOURCES

Cancer booklets launched

The charity CancerBACUP has launched two booklets offering practical advice for cancer patients. "Controlling the symptoms of cancer" covers tiredness, eating problems, nausea and depression, along with less common symptoms such as hiccups and itching. Medicines and complementary therapies are included. The other booklet, entitled "Controlling cancer pain", covers both medicines and other methods of pain control. CancerBACUP offers a telephone information service (tel 0808 800 1234) and website (www.cancerbacup.org.uk).

CORRECTIONS

AGM

The name of Eve Hopkins was wrongly given as Emma Hopkins in our report of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's annual general meeting last week (p732).

Council election

Hassan Argomandkhah has completed three three-year terms on the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Council, not two as stated last week (p729).

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