

PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS

Augmentin Duo

A strawberry flavoured, sugar-free Augmentin Duo (amoxicillin, clavulanic acid) Suspension 400/57 has been launched by GlaxoSmithKline; net price 70ml £6.61.

SPC CHANGES

Epilim use during pregnancy

The summary of product characteristics for Epilim (sodium valproate) has been updated to strengthen the warnings relating to its use during pregnancy (Sanofi-Synthelabo). The SPC now states that women of childbearing potential should not be started on Epilim without specialist neurological advice because of the potential teratogenic risk to the fetus. It adds that the incidence of neural tube defects rises with increasing dosage, particularly above 1,000mg daily. A statement on the rate of malformations in offspring born to mothers receiving anti-epilepsy treatment, demonstrated to be two to three times higher than the rate reported in the general population, is now included. The SPC also says that women should be advised to start taking folic acid supplements (5mg) as soon as contraception is discontinued and that antiepileptic therapy should not be stopped suddenly. Valproate anti-epileptic treatment should not be discontinued during pregnancy if it has been effective.

Depakote use during pregnancy

The summary of product characteristics for Depakote (valproate semi-sodium) has been updated to strengthen the warnings relating to its use during pregnancy (Sanofi-Synthelabo). The SPC now states that women of childbearing potential should receive specialist psychiatric advice before starting Depakote and if planning a pregnancy while taking Depakote because of the potential teratogenic risk to the fetus. It adds that the incidence of neural tube defects rises with increasing dosage, particularly above 1,000mg daily. The SPC also says that women should be advised to start taking folic acid supplementation (5mg) as soon as contraception is discontinued.

Biliscopin and hepato-biliary disorders

The summary of product characteristics for Biliscopin (meglumine iotroxate) has been updated. The following statement has been added to the undesirable effects section: "A transient elevation of liver values in blood serum (eg, ALT [GPT], AST

[GOT], GGT, LDH, ALP, bilirubin) may occur especially in patients with pre-existing hepato-biliary disorders."

COUNTER MEDICINES

Cetirizine tablets

Alpharma has launched cetirizine dihydrochloride 10mg tablets. Price 1 x 7 £2.21, 1 x 30 £7.42.

DISCONTINUED PRODUCTS

Flagyl Compak

Flagyl Compak (metronidazole and nystatin) pessaries (Hawgreen Ltd) have been discontinued. Any outstanding orders with Distriphar will be cancelled. Queries should be directed to Distriphar customer services on 0870 513 3347.

Urografin 325

Urografin 325 (meglumine amidotrizoate and sodium amidotrizoate) solution for injection, 10 x 20ml has been discontinued. The 10 x 50ml pack size remains available.

SUPPLY PROBLEMS

Quinine bisulphate

Quinine bisulphate 300mg tablets are now back in stock (Alpharma). Queries should be directed to the company's 24-hour medical helpline (tel 01271 311257).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GSK nozzle changes

GlaxoSmithKline is slightly increasing the nozzle size on some of its cream and ointment presentations. The change will take place from mid-July and will affect Betnovate, Cutivate, Dermovate and Eumovate brands in 50g and 100g packs. The change is being made in response to customer complaints about rare splitting of tube seams. It will make the tubes easier to squeeze and slightly more product will come out than before. Patients can still use fingertip units to measure doses but they will need to reduce slightly the amount of time they squeeze the tubes for in order to receive the required amount. Details from GSK customer contact centre on 0800 221441.

FUTURE EVENTS

Pharmacists against tobacco

World Conference on Tobacco special session on "Pharmacists against tobacco: trends and experiences".

Helsinki Fair Centre, Finland, 5 August. Further information from Satu Tainio, FIP Secretariat, PO Box 84200, 2508 AE The Hague, The Netherlands (e-mail satu@fip.org; see also www.pharmacistagainsttobacco.org).

Labelling conference

Management forum conference on "Pharmaceutical labelling and patient information", Rembrandt Hotel, London, 1 July, £520 plus VAT. Details from Management Forum Ltd, 48 Woodbridge Road, Guildford GU1 4RJ (tel 01483 570099, e-mail registrations@management-forum.co.uk).

WANTS LIST

German exchange

The Schmitz-Remy family from Rheine, Germany, is looking for a British family to become pen pals with. Georg Schmitz-Remy is an independent pharmacist and his wife is a physiotherapist. They have two daughters aged 11 and 13, both of whom have been learning English. The family's interests include classical music and singing and they hope that correspondence will eventually lead to an exchange. Georg can be contacted at donbosco-apotheke@t-online.de

Controlled Drugs regulations

Nigel Morley, MRPharmS, wants to hear from pharmacists who are working in close collaboration with general medical practitioners. He is working in the field of medical education in general medical practice and is interested in pharmacists' views on the proposed ending of the Controlled Drugs handwriting requirements. He can be contacted via www.controlleddrugs.org.

Mervyn Madge

The death of Mervyn Madge, FRPharmS, has been announced. An obituary notice will be published in next week's issue. His funeral will take place on 4 July at noon at St Andrew's Church, Plymouth.

AWARDS

Medical Futures Innovation Awards

Applications for the 2003 Medical Futures Innovation Awards must be made by 11 July. Entrants are required to submit a 300 word summary of their idea or business proposition via the website www.medicalfutures.co.uk. There are 10 award categories and successful entrants can win £10,000 and possibly up to £100,000.

CORRECTIONS

Prescription charges in Wales

Ending prescription charges in Wales will benefit around 50 per cent of all patients in Wales (1.5 million), not 11 per cent as stated in last week's news feature (p856).

BPC programme

The AstraZeneca Industrial Achievement Award was accidentally omitted from last week's summary of this year's British Pharmaceutical Conference programme (p869). The award will be presented at noon on the Tuesday to Dr John Staniforth, of Vectura, who will speak on "Difficult drugs and easy administration: meeting the 21st century challenge for inhaled, oral and dermal product developments".

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