

## PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS

### Kapake effervescent

Kapake (paracetamol 500mg and codeine phosphate hemihydrate 30mg) effervescent tablets are now available from Galen; net price, 100 £8.90. Legal category: CD Inv POM

### Gentamicin Paediatric

Gentamicin paediatric injection 10mg/ml is now available from Beacon Pharmaceuticals; net price, 5 × 2ml £9. Legal category: POM. Orders should be placed via Distriphar (tel 0870 5133347, fax 0870 5133329).

### Sodium bicarbonate

Sodium bicarbonate tablets 600mg are now available from IVAX in packs of 100; net price £2.48. Legal category POM. They can be ordered through Dowellhurst (0800 7314040) or DE Pharmaceuticals (0800 0720626). IVAX says two batches of these tablets, CCV48A and CCV47A, have the incorrect EAN code, but stock with the correct EAN code will be available from May.

### Mianserin tablets

Mianserin hydrochloride tablets 10mg are now available in packs of 28 (IVAX); net price, £2.70. Legal category: POM. Packs of 30mg × 28 will be available in May; net price £5.40.

## SPC CHANGES

### Videx

The summary of product characteristics for Videx (didanosine) now states that inhibitors of xanthine oxidase, such as allopurinol, may increase exposure to didanosine when administered together, increasing the potential for didanosine-associated undesirable effects (Bristol-Myers Squibb). Patients should be closely monitored for these effects. The undesirable effects section has been updated and pancreatitis and peripheral neuropathy are now listed as anticipated complications of overdose. See SPC.

### Risperdal

The summaries of product characteristics for Risperdal (risperidone) and Risperdal Consta now state that Risperdal is not licensed for the treatment of behavioural symptoms of dementia and is not recommended for this use because of an increased risk of cerebrovascular adverse events (Janssen-Cilag). Data

regarding the increased risk of cerebrovascular adverse events with Risperdal in elderly patients with dementia have been included. The SPCs now state that doctors should carefully consider the risk of such events before treating any patient with a previous history of cardiovascular accident or transient ischaemic attack, and consideration should be given to other risk factors for cerebrovascular disease. For all formulations apart from Risperdal Consta, the SPC states that treatment of acute psychoses in patients with a history of dementia be limited to short term only and should be under specialist advice. See SPC.

### Cialis

The summary of product characteristics for Cialis (tadalafil) no longer states that the dose should be taken 24 hours before sexual activity, but states that the effect of tadalafil usually lasts for longer than one day (Lilly). Continuous daily use of the medicine is strongly discouraged. In clinical studies Cialis demonstrated significant improvement in the ability to have sexual intercourse up to 36 hours following dosing. The SPC now states that there are limited clinical data on the safety of Cialis in patients with severe hepatic insufficiency. If prescribed, an evaluation of the benefit versus the risk should be undertaken by the prescribing physician. See SPC.

## COUNTER PRODUCTS

### Dymotil tablets

Dymotil (diphenoxylate hydrochloride 2.5mg and atropine sulphate 0.025mg) tablets have been launched (Goldshield Pharmaceuticals). They are the over-the-counter version of Lomotil. Recommended retail price, 20 £2.82. Legal category: P



### Zirtek Allergy

Zirtek Allergy (cetirizine hydrochloride) tablets 10mg are now available in packs of 21 (UCB Pharma); recommended retail price £8.95. Legal category: P

## DISCONTINUED PRODUCTS

### Vibramycin Acne Pack

Vibramycin (doxycycline) Acne Pack capsules 50mg × 56 have been discontinued (Pfizer). Other formulations of Vibramycin remain available. Further details from Pfizer customer services on 01304 645262.

### Aromasin tablets

Aromasin (exemestane) tablets 25mg × 15 have been discontinued (Pfizer). Other pack sizes of Aromasin remain available. Further details from Pfizer customer services on 01304 645262.

### Rohypnol tablets

Rohypnol (flunitrazepam) tablets 1mg are being discontinued (Roche). The company expects stocks to be exhausted by the end of May.

### Zispin tablets

Zispin (mirtazapine) tablets 30mg are being discontinued (Organon). The company expects stocks to be exhausted by 1 May. The Zispin SolTab range remains available.

### Mianserin tablets

Mianserin tablets 20mg tablets have been discontinued (IVAX).

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Dulco-lax Perles

Dulco-lax Perles (sodium picosulfate) capsules are now available in packs of 20 (Boehringer Ingelheim). Recommended retail price £2.99. Legal category: GSL

## RESOURCES

### Eczema resources

The National Society for Eczema has launched a booklet for pharmacists entitled "Eczema and its management". Free copies are available to readers of *The Journal* until 1 May by sending an A5 self-addressed envelope to PJ Offer, Hill House, Highgate Hill, London N19 5NA. The eczema society has also launched a free booklet designed to help teenagers cope with eczema (tel 0870 2413604, e-mail helpline@eczema.org) and helpline contact

cards (tel 020 7281 3553 ext 225, e-mail professional@eczema.org).

### Blood glucose

The Diabetes Monitoring Forum has launched a series of leaflets to offer people with diabetes more specific advice on blood glucose monitoring, depending on the medicine the patient is taking. There are six leaflets for adults and one leaflet for parents of a child with type 1 diabetes. Small quantities of the leaflets, sponsored by Medisense can be ordered on 01483 861300 (e-mail info@dmforum.org).

## FUTURE EVENTS

### Dermatology

Royal College of Physicians, British Association of Dermatologists and the NHS Modernisation Agency conference entitled "How to improve dermatology services — a lesson from Action on Dermatology", Royal College of Physicians, London, 27 April. Standard fee £150. Discounts for RCP and BAD fellows and associates. Details on 020 7935 1174 (e-mail conferences@rcplondon.ac.uk).

### Medicines management

Faculty of Prescribing and Medicines Management spring conference entitled "Making change positive: rising to the challenge", Royal College of Physicians, Regents Park, London, 11 May. Cost members £25, non-members £90. Further details from Lucie Lancashire on 01483 533316 (e-mail llancash@wiley.co.uk).

### Medicines partnerships

Primary Care Pharmacists Association study series on "Compliance and medicines partnership". Proposed dates and venues; Leeds 10 May, Leicester 14 May, London 17 May, Manchester 21 May, Bristol 24 May, Falkirk 11 June. The workshops are free to attend. Further details from Michelle Kaulbach on 020 8398 7349 (e-mail michelle@pharmacomm.co.uk). Website www.pcpa.org.uk.

## CORRECTIONS

### Shiv Bagga

The name of Save Our Society candidate Shiv Bagga was misspelt in a news item in last week's *Journal* (p369).

## Pharmacy Assistant of the Year receives £2,000 prize in awards ceremony held at Society's HQ



Parminder Singadia (right) receives her award from Gill Hawksworth



Left to right: Ann Lewis, the Society's Secretary and Registrar, Lesley Johnson, Roslyn Bruce, Trudy Thomas, pharmacy writer, Parminder Singadia, Harriet Adcock, Pat Williams, Mel Smith and Gill Hawksworth

Pharmacy assistant Parminder Singadia, of Masters Pharmacy, Sparkhill, Birmingham, has been awarded the title of Pharmacy Assistant of the Year 2003. She was presented with a £2,000 holiday voucher and commemorative vase by the President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Gill Hawksworth at an awards lunch held at the Society's headquarters in London on 19 March.

Mrs Singadia, who is studying towards a national vocational qualification in dispensing, has worked as a pharmacy assistant since her school days. She said she was thrilled to have reached the final of the competition, adding "to actually win it is out of this world". She said being a pharmacy assistant was challenging and an ongoing learning experience. "I would encourage all assistants to seek professional development opportunities and support from their pharmacists."

A tie for the winning place was settled by interview with a panel of judges — Lesley Johnson, head of education and training, National Pharmaceutical Association, Mel Smith, head of medical and pharmacy affairs, Reckitt Benckiser (sponsors of the award), and Harriet Adcock, editor of *The Pharmacy Assistant* and news editor on *The Journal*. Mrs Singadia was joined in the final by Pat Williams of Manor Pharmacy, Shevington and Roslyn Bruce, of Robert Whitelaw pharmacy in Aberdeen. The finalists were tested on product knowledge, customer services and other pharmacy-related topics. The runners-up each won a £500 holiday voucher and vase.

Speaking at the awards lunch, Mrs Johnson commented on the exceptionally high standard of all the entries. She added: "Pharmacy assistants are valuable members of the pharmacy health care team providing added value to the customers. Pharmacists appreciate the hard work carried out by assistants in providing a first class and professional service." Mr Smith noted the worth of the Society, the NPA and the pharmaceutical industry working together to provide training for pharmacy assistants. He added: "The quality of the finalists is a credit to their pharmacies."

Before presenting the awards, Dr Hawksworth acknowledged the importance of ongoing training. "Pharmacists and the people who work alongside them need to keep up to date in order to provide the best service possible for patients and customers. Learning is a lifelong thing. But it can be fun, especially when it leads to happy events like today. I would like to offer my personal congratulations and those of the Society to all of the winners."

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