

## PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS

### Striant

Striant (testosterone) mucoadhesive buccal tablets have been launched (Ardana); net price, 60 £45.84. Each tablet contains 30mg testosterone in a bioadhesive matrix. The company says Striant is the first such product to be launched for testosterone replacement therapy for men with primary or secondary hypogonadism.

## SPC CHANGES

### Enbrel injection

Enbrel (etanercept) is now licensed to be used in combination with methotrexate (Wyeth). The amended summary of product characteristics states that it can be used alone or in combination with methotrexate for the treatment of active rheumatoid arthritis in adults when the response to disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs, including methotrexate (unless contraindicated), has been inadequate. See SPC.

### Protopic ointment

Dosage instructions for Protopic (tacrolimus) ointment have been updated. When used in adults, the recommendation now is that treatment should be started with Protopic 0.1 per cent twice a day and continued until clearance of the lesion. If symptoms recur, twice daily treatment with Protopic 0.1 per cent should be restarted. An attempt should be made to reduce the frequency of application or to use the lower strength Protopic 0.03 per cent ointment if the clinical condition allows. There is no change to how the drug should be used in children. Data from new clinical trials have been included. See SPC.

## DISCONTINUED PRODUCTS

### Bretylium tosylate

Bretylium tosylate injection Minijet 50mg/ml is to be discontinued owing to difficulties in obtaining the active material (International Medication Systems UK). Current stocks are expected to be exhausted by the end of July.

## PRODUCTS MISCELLANY

### Fuzeon

Roche has introduced new safety guard syringes into the convenience kit for Fuzeon (enfuvirtide). The company says the new syringes are easy to use

and will continue to provide protection against needle stick injury. They replace the previously available retractable safety syringes.

### Rebif injection device

Serono has launched the Rebiject II auto-injector, a device for self-injection of Rebif (interferon beta-1a). The device is intended to make self-injection less painful and less complex for patients. It is designed for use specifically with the Rebif pre-filled syringe. Serono says that the device will be supplied at no extra charge to patients being prescribed Rebif.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NE Business Awards

The Specials Laboratory, a manufacturer and supplier of unlicensed medicines, has been named small business of the year in the North East Business Awards 2003.

### Castlemead Healthcare

The medical information department for Castlemead Healthcare Ltd has moved to 2nd Floor, The Maltings, Bridge Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG25 2DE (tel 01462 454452, fax 01462 435684).

### Aventis and Distriphar

Owing to a transfer to a new computer ordering system, Aventis and Distriphar Customer Services (West Malling) will be temporarily shutting down the current system at the beginning of July. Since orders will not be able to be processed during the shut-down, customers are asked to fax their orders to 08705 133329 to cover the first two weeks in July by 15 June, stating on the fax: "This is the July order." These orders will be processed and invoiced in June (with one extra month's credit) but will not be delivered until July. (Orders placed via Bedford Customer Services are not affected.)

### Steroid cards

Blue steroid cards in England and Wales are now available from NHS Customer Services, Astron,

## DRUG SAFETY INFORMATION

### Mercaptamine/mercaptapurine confusion

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency says it has received reports of medication errors arising from confusion between mercaptamine (the new name for cysteamine) and mercaptapurine. Pharmacists are reminded to:

- Take particular care when dispensing mercaptamine and mercaptapurine
- Be aware that there may be some new names which are unfamiliar, but perceived as alphabetically similar to established names, and take extra care to ensure that the correct medicine is selected

Causeway Distribution Centre, Oldham Broadway Business Park, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 8XD (tel 0161 683 2376, fax 0161 683 2396). The Department of Health no longer pays for these cards and now a charge of £4.83 + VAT per 100 cards must be paid. The product code to use when ordering is "STC".

## RESOURCES

### Lab Tests Online

Lab Tests Online is a new website being launched on 16 June. It is intended to give patients and carers a better understanding of clinical laboratory tests (www.

labtestsonline.org.uk). It will also be available via NHS Direct Online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).

## FUTURE EVENTS

### Pharmacoeconomics

Centre for the Economics of Health, Institute of Medical and Social Care Research, University of Wales of Bangor seminar on "Pharmacoeconomics and prescribing in Wales: current state and future direction". Bodelwyddan Castle, Denbighshire, 13 July. Free of charge. Further details from Jaime Ellis on 01248 382957 (e-mail mhse08@bangor.ac.uk).

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