

## PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS

### Aranesp

Aranesp (darbepoetin alfa) pre-filled syringe 500µg/ml is now available from Amgen; net price, 1 syringe £838. For distribution to hospital pharmacies contact Amgen (tel 0808 010 0321), to retail pharmacies contact Farillon (tel 0800 587 5653) and for home delivery contact Fresenius Medical Care (tel 01623 445221).

### Quinapril

Quinapril tablets are now available from Alpharma; net price, 5mg 28 £8.60, 10mg 28 £8.60, 20mg 28 £10.79.

### Bendrofluzide

APS/Numark dual branded bendrofluzide tablets 2.5mg are now available to Numark members; net price, 28 28p.

### Simvastatin

APS/Numark dual branded simvastatin tablets are now available to Numark members; net price, 10mg 28 80p, 20mg 28 £1.10, 40mg 28 £3.35.

## SPC CHANGES

### Cerazette

The "missed pill window" for Cerazette (desogestrel) has been extended (Organon). The summary of product characteristics now states that contraceptive protection may be reduced if more than 36 hours have elapsed between two tablets. If the user is less than 12 hours late in taking any tablet, the missed tablets should be taken as soon as it is remembered and the next tablet should be taken at the usual time. If she is more than 12 hours late, she should use an additional method of contraception for the next seven days. See SPC.

### Epilim

The summaries of product characteristics for Epilim (sodium valproate), Epilim Chrono and Epilim intravenous have been updated (Sanofi-Synthelabo). A section on sodium valproate use in patients with hepatic insufficiency has been added, stating that salicylates should not be used concomitantly with valproate since they employ the same metabolic pathway. The SPCs state that liver dysfunction, including hepatic failure resulting in fatalities has occurred in patients whose treatment included valproic acid. The concomitant use of salicylates should be avoided in children under

three years old due to the risk of liver toxicity. This is in addition to the warning that salicylates should not be used in children under 16 years old. See SPCs.

### Etopophos

The summary of product characteristics for Etopophos (etoposide phosphate) injection now states that caution should be exercised when administering it with drugs that are known to inhibit phosphatase activities, eg levamisole hydrochloride (Bristol-Myers Squibb). High dose cyclosporin administered with oral etoposide has led to an increase in etoposide exposure. In children, elevated SGPT levels are associated with reduced drug total body clearance. Prior use of cisplatin may also result in a decrease of etoposide total body clearance in children. The SPC now states that etoposide can cause fetal harm when administered to pregnant women. If the drug is used during pregnancy, or if the patient becomes pregnant while receiving it, the patient should be told of the potential hazard to the fetus. It is not known whether etoposide is excreted in human milk and a decision should be made whether to discontinue nursing or to discontinue etoposide. See SPC.

## DISCONTINUED PRODUCTS

### Sofradex ointment

Sofradex (framycetin sulphate, dexamethasone and gramicidin) ear/eye ointment 5g will be discontinued when current stocks are exhausted (Florizel). The company expects this to be in August. Any outstanding back orders will be cancelled. Sofradex ear/eye drops remain available. Details from Distriphar customer services on 0870 5133347.

## PRODUCTS MISCELLANY

### Mysoline

Towards the end of this year responsibility for Mysoline (primidone) will be transferred to Acorus Therapeutics (tel 01388 710770, e-mail enquiries@acorus-therapeutics.com). The company says this will secure long-term supply of the product. In the meantime the product remains available from AstraZeneca (tel 01582 837837).

### Tagamet responsibility

Responsibility for Tagamet (cimetidine) tablets and syrup

## Yorkshire preregistration awards



Pictured are the winners of the Yorkshire regional preregistration trainee project awards with their sponsor and organiser; (left to right) Julie Sowter, regional preregistration training co-ordinator, Howard Tebby, commercial development manager, Pfizer, Anniela Iqbal, second prize winner for oral presentation, Adris Razaq (best poster), Judith Pearson (first prize winner for oral presentation) and Elizabeth Day (third prize winner for oral presentation). Ms Iqbal's project, an investigation into the quality of prescribing in neurosurgery, also won an award for the project which contributed most to patient care. All the trainees were based at the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust.

(formerly GlaxoSmithKline) has been transferred to Chemidex Pharma. Prices for these products are unchanged. Future orders should be placed with Farillon, Ashton Road, Romford, Essex RM3 8UE (tel 01708 379000, fax 01708 376554). Enquiries regarding Tagamet should be directed to Chemidex (tel 01784 477167, fax 01784 471776).

## AWARDS

### Queens awards

UK-based companies are invited to apply for a 2005 Queen's award for enterprise. The three categories are; international trade innovation and sustainable development. Details and entry forms at [www.queensawards.org.uk](http://www.queensawards.org.uk) (tel 0870 513 4486). Deadline 31 October.

## RESOURCES

### Coeliac disease

The Coeliac Disease Resource Centre has launched the final unit of its pharmacy education programme on coeliac disease and the gluten-free diet. The training module, called "diabetes and weight control in coeliac disease" follows on from existing modules on "coeliac disease" and "common health problems in coeliac disease", all of which have received the National Pharmaceutical Association training seal. The units, sponsored by Glutafin, are available free from CDRC (tel 01225 711566, e-mail [cdc@nutricia.co.uk](mailto:cdc@nutricia.co.uk)). Website [www.cdrc.org.uk](http://www.cdrc.org.uk).

### Buying and selling pharmacies

A guide to buying and selling pharmacy businesses has been produced by the law firm Charles Russell. The guide covers aspects such as structuring the sale and purchase, identifying assets to be transferred, steps in the transaction and tax allowances and reliefs. Free copies can be obtained from Stephanie Palmer (tel 020 7203 5065, email [stephanie.palmer@charlesrussell.co.uk](mailto:stephanie.palmer@charlesrussell.co.uk)) or downloaded at [www.charlesrussell.co.uk](http://www.charlesrussell.co.uk).

### Xenical online support

The Xenical motivation, advice and proactive support patient service, currently operating as a telephone support line (*PJ*, 18 October 2003, p538) is now also available online. Patients are able to create menus and exercise regimens to suit their lifestyles, and join a discussion forum for support from other patients and health care professionals. Website [www.xenicalmap.co.uk](http://www.xenicalmap.co.uk).

## CORRECTIONS

### Pharmacogenetics research

The main recipient of Government funding for a project to examine whether a person's genetic make up influences adverse reactions to azathioprine is the University of Manchester not Salford Royal Hospital as stated in last week's *PJ* (p792). Also, the test being developed at St James's University Hospital, Leeds is for malignant hyperthermia not hypothermia (p792).