

## NEW MEDICINES

### Lucentis

COMPOSITION: Ranibizumab.

PRESENTATION: Solution for injection.

CLASS: Humanised recombinant monoclonal antibody fragment targeted against human vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) A.

INDICATIONS: Neovascular (wet) age-related macular degeneration. DOSAGE: 0.5mg (0.05ml) given by intravitreal injection once a month for three consecutive months. Patients should be monitored monthly thereafter and given further doses if loss of visual acuity (>5 letters) occurs.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Active or suspected ocular or periocular infection; active severe intraocular inflammation.

PRECAUTIONS: The interval between two doses should be at least one month. Lucentis should be inspected visually for particulate matter and discolouration before administration. Patient should self-administer antimicrobial drops four times a day for three days before and after each injection. The injection procedure should be carried out under aseptic conditions. The periocular skin, eyelid and ocular surface should be disinfected, and anaesthesia and a broad-spectrum topical microbicide should be administered before the injection. A different scleral site should be selected for each injection.

Intravitreal injections, including those with Lucentis, have been associated with endophthalmitis, intraocular inflammation, rhegmatogenous retinal detachment, retinal tear and iatrogenic traumatic cataract; patients should be instructed to report any symptoms suggestive of these conditions without delay. Patients should be monitored for infection during the week following injection. Intraocular pressure and perfusion of the optic nerve must be monitored after administration. Use of Lucentis in both eyes has not been studied and could lead to increased risk of systemic adverse events. Lucentis should not be administered concurrently with other anti-VEGF agents. The dose should be withheld and treatment should not be continued earlier than the next scheduled treatment in the event of: visual acuity reduced  $\geq 30$  letters; intraocular pressure  $\geq 30$ mmHg; retinal break; subretinal haemorrhage involving the centre of the fovea or  $\geq 50$  per cent of the total lesion area; intraocular surgery

planned or performed 28 days before or after. Treatment should be discontinued in patients with rhegmatogenous retinal detachment or stage 3 or 4 macular holes. Lucentis treatment may induce temporary visual disturbances which may affect the ability to drive or operate machinery.

SIDE EFFECTS: Very common ( $\geq 1/10$ ) headache, conjunctival haemorrhage, eye pain, vitreous floaters, retinal haemorrhage, increased intraocular pressure, vitreous detachment, intraocular inflammation, eye irritation, cataract, foreign body sensation in eyes, visual disturbance, blepharitis, subretinal fibrosis, ocular hyperaemia, visual acuity decreased, dry eye, vitritis, hypertension. Common ( $\geq 1/100$ ,  $< 1/10$ ) ocular discomfort, conjunctival hyperaemia, posterior capsule opacification, retinal exudates, injection site reactions, lacrimation increased, eye pruritus, conjunctivitis, maculopathy, detachment of the retinal pigment epithelium, nausea, arthralgia, back pain, bronchitis, anaemia. LEGAL CATEGORY: POM. NET PRICE: 1 x 3mg/0.3ml vial, £761.20.

CONTACT DETAILS: Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd, Frimley Business Park, Frimley, Surrey GU16 7SR (tel 01276 692255).

## SPC CHANGES

### Competact

The summary of product characteristics for Competact (pioglitazone/metformin; Takeda) has been updated to include new information about an interaction with gemfibrozil. See SPC.

### Cymbalta

The summary of product characteristics for Cymbalta (duloxetine; Lilly) has been updated and now states that the initiation of treatment with Cymbalta is contraindicated in patients with uncontrolled hypertension that could expose them to a potential risk of hypertensive crisis. The special warnings and undesirable effects sections have been updated accordingly. See SPC.

### Lyrica

The summary of product characteristics for Lyrica (pregabalin; Pfizer) has been updated to include a special warning on post-marketing reports of congestive heart failure in some patients receiving

pregabalin. The SPC says that pregabalin should be used with caution in patients with severe congestive heart failure. The following possible undesirable effects reported from post-marketing experience have been added as "unknown frequency": heart failure, swollen tongue, hypersensitivity, swollen face, allergic reaction, diarrhoea, nausea, headache and itchiness. See SPC.

### NutropinAq

The summary of product characteristics for NutropinAq (somatropin; Ipsen) has been updated. The special warnings section now contains the following: "Slipped capital femoral epiphyses and aseptic necrosis of the femoral head may be seen in children with advanced renal osteodystrophy and in growth hormone deficiency, and it is uncertain whether these problems are affected by growth hormone therapy. Physicians and parents should be alerted to the development of a limp or complaints of hip or knee pain in patients treated with NutropinAq." The SPC also now says that, although growth hormone treatment has not been shown to increase the incidence or severity of scoliosis, signs of scoliosis should be monitored during treatment. See SPC.

## PRESCRIPTION PRODUCTS

### DDAVP Melt

DDAVP Melt (desmopressin; Ferring) sublingual tablets are now available in 240µg strength. Net price: 100, £202.14. Legal category: POM.

### DesmoMelt

DesmoMelt (desmopressin; Ferring) sublingual tablets are now available in 240µg strength. Net price: 30, £60.68. Legal category: POM.

### Exforge

Exforge (amlodipine/valsartan) film-coated tablets are now available from Novartis. Net price: 28 x 5/80mg, £16.44; 28 x 5/160mg, £21.66; 28 x 10/160mg, £21.66. Legal category: POM.

## DRUG TARIFF UPDATES

### NCSO endorsements

The Department of Health and the National Assembly for Wales have agreed to allow "no cheaper stock obtainable" (NCSO) endorsements for bisacodyl EC

tablets 5mg, diamorphine injection ampoules 5mg, 100mg and 500mg, and ketoprofen capsules 100mg for February prescriptions.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Fitness to practise

The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee has produced a form (FtP2) which pharmacists can use to inform their primary care trusts of adverse incidents that may affect their fitness to practise (as required in contractors' terms of service). Available from the regulatory issues/fitness to practise section of the PSNC website (www.psn.org.uk).

### NPA board election

Nomination forms for the National Pharmacy Association board of management triennial election have been mailed to all full NPA members. The deadline for responses is 22 February.

## FUTURE EVENTS

### Success for Pharmacy

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and Ceuta Healthcare "Success for pharmacy" exhibition and seminars, Telford, 4 March; Leeds, 11 March; London, 18 March. Free of charge. Further information via www.psn.org.uk/events.

## CORRECTIONS

### IPG committee

Due to an administrative error a Notice-board item "IPC committee" listed current members of the Industrial Pharmacists Group committee, not newly elected members (PJ, 10 February, p161); nominations for the IPG committee election are still open. See **Society** p203.

## Contact us

Notice-board welcomes information relevant to pharmacists. There is no charge for inclusion of an item but *The Journal* is unable to guarantee a particular publication date.

From March, items received before 1pm on Monday will be considered for publication in that week's *Journal*. Information can be e-mailed to notice-board@pharmj.org.uk