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Worldwide Biopharmaceutical Businesses

Direct Healthcare Professional Communication

13/01/2020

Methotrexate for autoimmune diseases: recommendations to reduce potentially fatal dosing errors

Dear Healthcare Professional,

Marketing Authorisation Holders of medicines containing methotrexate, in agreement with the European Medicines Agency and the MHRA, would like to inform you of the following:

Summary

- Dosing errors with serious consequences, including fatalities, have been reported when methotrexate intended for once-weekly use in autoimmune diseases was taken daily.
- Only healthcare professionals with expertise* in using methotrexate-containing medicines should prescribe them.
- Healthcare professionals who prescribe or dispense methotrexate for autoimmune diseases should
    - provide to the patient/carer full and clear dosing instructions on the once weekly dosing;
    - check carefully at every new prescription /dispensing that the patient/carer understands that the medicine must be used once weekly and that overdose can lead to serious side effects;
    - decide together with the patient/carer on which day of the week the patient uses methotrexate. The day of the week should be noted down in full;
    - inform the patient/carer of signs of overdose and instruct them to promptly seek medical advice in case of suspected overdose.

Background on the safety concern

Methotrexate is authorised in the EU for two different groups of indications, each of them with a different administration schedule:

- For the treatment of cancer in which frequency depends on the regimen and can require daily administration of methotrexate.

*Prescribers should be aware of the benefits and risks of methotrexate products and have the necessary competence to safely prescribe them

Registered in England: No 526209
Registered Office: Ramsgate Road
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- For the treatment of autoimmune diseases including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and Crohn's disease, which require once-weekly use.

Despite measures already in place to prevent dosing errors, serious, sometimes fatal, cases continue to be reported in which patients being treated for autoimmune diseases have taken methotrexate daily instead of once-weekly.

A safety review performed at EU level found that these errors can occur at all stages of the medication process. Therefore, further measures to prevent dosing errors will be introduced, including prominent warnings on outer and inner packaging and updates to the summary of product characteristics and package leaflet. For oral formulations, there will be educational materials for healthcare professionals and a patient card will be provided with each package. In addition, tablets will only be available in blister packs.

Call for reporting

Suspected adverse reactions **and any medication error which results in patient harm** should be reported to the MHRA through the Yellow Card Scheme.

When reporting, please provide as much information as possible. It is easiest and quickest to report ADRs online via the Yellow Card website: www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store.

Alternatively, prepaid Yellow Cards for reporting are available:

- by writing to FREEPOST YELLOW CARD (no other address details necessary)
- by emailing yellowcard@mhra.gov.uk
- at the back of the British National Formulary (BNF)
- via the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) free phone line: 0800-731-6789
- by downloading and printing a form from the Yellow Card section of the MHRA website.

Suspected adverse drug reactions may also be reported to Pfizer Medical Information on 01304 616161.

Company contacts

These materials are being sent to you by Pfizer on behalf of the group of companies listed below, who are Marketing Authorisation holders for medicines containing methotrexate. If you require additional information, please contact the medical information services of the individual company.

Company	Medical Information contact details	
Accord Healthcare Limited	medinfo@accord-healthcare.com	Dr Jacqueline Roberts Executive Director RPM
Actavis Group Ptc Ehf.	medinfo@accord-healthcare.com	Dr Jacqueline Roberts Executive Director RPM
Cipla (Eu) Limited	Drugsafety@cipla.com	Gillian Latham, Director European Regulatory Affairs
Ebewe Pharma	sandoz@professionalinformation.co.uk	Chris Worth Medical Director, Sandoz Ltd
Hameln Pharmaceuticals Ltd	drugsafety@hameln.co.uk	Richard Wysocki | Medical Affairs Director
Hospira Uk Ltd	EUMEDINFO@pfizer.com	
Medac Gesellschaft Für Klinische Spezialpräparate Mbh (Wedel)	info@medacpharma.co.uk	Alistair McMurray, Managing Director, medac pharma LLP
Mercury Pharmaceuticals Ltd.	medicalinformation@advanzpharma.com	Name: Dr. Smita Mukane Signature:
Morningside Healthcare Ltd	info@morningsidehealthcare.com	Julie Hibbert, Deputy Head of Regulatory Affairs
Nordic Group B.V.	nordic@professionalinformation.co.uk	**Name:** Minesh Vaidya **Title:** Head of Regulatory Compliance/GDP Responsible Person/ Local Safety Officer **Company:** Nordic Pharma Ltd.
Orion Corporation	uk.medicalinformation@orionpharma.com	Jo Chitttey, Medical Information Manager
Pfizer Limited	EUMEDINFO@pfizer.com	Dr Anoop Kumar MB;BS, MRCGP, MRCSEd, MBA Consultant – Medical Affairs Pfizer Biopharmaceuticals Group
Rosemont Pharmaceuticals Limited	RosemontPharmacovigilance@perrigouk.com	Name: Jeff Rothwell Title : Head of UK Global Patient Safety – QPPV Company: Rosemont Pharmaceuticals Ltd

Your Sincerley,

Digitally signed by Dr Anoop Kumar
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