

Medicines

Optimisation news headlines

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Top tip – Prescribe bimatoprost eye drops as the 0.01% strength

Allergan have ceased supply of bimatoprost ophthalmic solution 0.03% (Lumigan®) Multidose eye drops. As this product is still under patent there is no generic version available.

Bimatoprost 0.01% has been shown to be equivalent to the 0.03% formulation in intraocular pressure lowering efficacy. The 0.01% formulation also demonstrates an improved tolerability profile in terms of severity of hyperaemia and ocular adverse events with subsequent patient discontinuation.

Bimatoprost 0.01% is thought to attain increased efficacy due to its higher concentration of benzalkonium chloride which increases ocular penetration through epithelial disruption. Bimatoprost 0.03% contains 0.05mg per ml benzalkonium chloride as preservative whereas bimatoprost 0.01% contains 0.2mg per ml (the same as latanoprost). Bimatoprost may provide greater efficacy for patients who have not responded sufficiently to latanoprost.

It is recommended that patients currently prescribed Bimatoprost 0.03% multidose eye drops are switched to bimatoprost 0.01%.

Preservative free preparations are expensive with many patients finding them fiddly and difficult to use. The preservative-free preparation of bimatoprost 0.03% should be reserved for those with preservative intolerance.

This approach has been endorsed by specialists from two of the local acute trusts; University Hospital Southampton and Royal Bournemouth Hospital.

Focus on specials

The [GMC](#) Good Prescribing Guidance (2013) lists the following instances where it may be necessary to prescribe unlicensed medicines:

- There is no suitably licensed medicine that will meet the patient's need.
- Or where a suitably licensed medicine that would meet the patient's need is not available.

The [MHRA](#) has also provided guidance regarding the supply of unlicensed medicines:

- Anyone supplying an unlicensed medicinal product, where an equivalent licensed medicinal product is available must be satisfied as to the existence of a special need for the unlicensed medicinal product.
- Although MHRA does not recommend "off-label" (outside the licensed indications) use of products, if a UK licensed product can meet the clinical need, even off-label, it should be used instead of an unlicensed product.



A number of licensed products are becoming available to replace medicines that would previously have been prescribed as specials. We will be focusing on some of these products in the coming months.

Vitamin D – special preparation or licensed product?

In the past year 736 items were prescribed for vitamin D as specials. Due to recent changes in the Drug Tariff, it is now possible to prescribe standard licensed products for virtually all situations where treatment and maintenance doses of vitamin D are required.

Vitamin D deficiency is best corrected by oral administration of vitamin D3, otherwise known as colecalciferol. The table below shows the range of products that are now listed by generic name in the Drug Tariff:

Colecalciferol preparation	Pack size	Price (Drug Tariff August 15)	Licensed age groups
800unit tablets	30	£3.60	Adults & adolescents
800unit capsules	30	£3.60	Age ≥ 12 years
3,200unit capsules	30	£13.32	Adults
20,000unit capsules	15 30	£17.04 £29.00	Age ≥ 12 years
40,000unit capsules	10	£15.00	Age ≥ 12 years
15,000units in 5ml oral solution	100ml	£119.70	Age ≥ 12 years
25,000units in 1ml oral solution	3 x 1ml unit doses	£4.45	All ages

Where treatment of vitamin D deficiency is required a loading dose of up to 300,000units, to be given over a period of 6 to 12 weeks is advocated. This can be achieved with one of the following regimens:

- 800 units 5 tablets or capsules each day for 10 weeks (total 280,000 units)
- 3,200 units 1 capsule each day for 12 weeks (total 268,800 units)
- 20,000units 2 capsules each week for 7 weeks (total 280,000 units)
- 40,000units 1 capsule each week for 7 weeks (total 280,000 units)

Subsequent maintenance doses can be provided with the 800 unit tablets or capsules.

Unlicensed food supplements such as Pro D3 and Aciferol are available for patients who require restricted diets, (e.g. due to religious beliefs, severe peanut allergy etc.), which precludes the use of a licensed product.

The key message is to prescribe generically and make sure the strength and formulation is met by one of the licensed products above.

Further information regarding diagnosis and treatment of vitamin D deficiency can be found in the National Osteoporosis Study document - [Vitamin D and Bone Health: A Practical Clinical Guideline for Patient Management](#)

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