

Medicines

Optimisation news headlines

September 2016

Buprenorphine Patches

Back in February 2015, the Basingstoke, Southampton & Winchester District Prescribing Committee made the recommendation that **all** buprenorphine patches should be prescribed by brand name. This was on the basis that three different brands had come onto the market offering varying strengths of buprenorphine and with different durations of action. The brand recommendation was intended to avoid confusion and reduce the risk of dosing errors.

Eighteen months on from this recommendation there are a multitude of products on the market, so it is now even more important to ensure that prescribing is by brand name. In West Hampshire, more than 75% of patches are still prescribed by under their generic name and this needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

Buprenorphine patches are not recommended for general use within the local area, but they are included in the [chronic pain guidelines](#). They are 2nd line on step 2 of the analgesic ladder and restricted to patients genuinely unable to swallow oral preparations or with renal failure to reduce accumulation of opioids. In addition they may sometimes be indicated in palliative care as specified in the [Palliative Care Handbook](#).

Practices are being asked to switch all buprenorphine patches, concentrating on the lower dose, 7-day patches first. Initially the only brand available was BuTrans[®] but a number of lower cost alternatives have now been marketed and the supply chain is well established for two products; Butec[®] and Reletrans[®]. Consequently these have become the preferred brands within the CCG. Savings of over £400,000 can be realised within West Hampshire by transferring all patients on lower strength buprenorphine patches to one of these lower cost products.

Product prices from 1st October are as follows:

Brand	Cost of 4 patches (28 day supply)			
	5 microgram/hour	10 microgram/hour	15 microgram/hour	20 microgram/hour
BuTrans [®]	£17.60	£31.55	£49.15	£57.46
Butec [®]	£7.92	£14.20	not yet available	£25.86
Reletrans [®]	£8.80*	£15.78*	£24.58*	£28.73*

*A confidential rebate scheme for Reletrans[®] is in place which reduces the cost further in primary care.

Butec[®] is an identical product to BuTrans[®] but for commercial reasons it has a different pricing structure. Therefore equal efficacy is guaranteed when switching from BuTrans[®] to Butec[®]. Currently the range does not contain a 15microgram/hour strength but this is due to be marketed



before the end of the year; however only 1% of low dose buprenorphine patch prescriptions were for this strength in the last quarter.

Members of the Medicines Optimisation Team will be available to help with the switch to either Butec® or Reletrans®.

Fosfomycin – prescribe as Monuril

Local microbiologists have voiced concerns regarding the increasing resistance to trimethoprim and co-amoxiclav, which is currently apparent in more than 30% of cases and may be contributing to the rise in E.coli bacteraemia that is being seen nationally. Nitrofurantoin remains the preferred first line agent for such patients but this is contraindicated in some older patients with severely impaired renal function.

Fosfomycin is the alternative agent that may be suggested by the microbiologists when reporting results for resistant organisms (e.g. ESBLs). It is likely that a higher profile for fosfomycin will be reflected in the updated Guidelines for Antibiotic Prescribing in the Community when they become available later this year.

Until recently it was only available as a very expensive unlicensed product but there is now a UK licensed product at a much more affordable price (£4.86 per sachet). In order to obtain the licensed product it must be prescribed as **Monuril 3g sachets**.

Monuril is being distributed through AAH and Alliance wholesalers and should be available to all community pharmacies once supplies start to come through.

Monuril is not yet showing as an option to prescribe on all the clinical systems but we have been assured that this should be rectified on the next practice update.

Access to Immunisation PGDs

As we approach the autumn the [routine immunisation schedule](#) for 2016/17 comes into full force. The associated Patient Group Direction (PGD) documents have now been updated by NHS England for both standard childhood immunisations and annual immunisation programmes such as influenza. It is important that all practices have up to date and signed copies of these PGDs in place. The documents will no longer be uploaded to the West Hampshire CCG website, but can be easily [accessed](#) through the NHS England website.

Quotas for supply to community pharmacies

It has been brought to our attention that quotas are in place for supply of some pharmaceutical products; e.g. apixaban. Manufacturers have limited the quantity supplied to the wholesalers, who in turn need to limit supplies to individual community pharmacies in order to ensure that some of the product is available for all. We have been advised that it may be possible to increase the amount of the quota in some cases but that this has to be organised through the normal supply chain. That is; the community pharmacist must contact their usual wholesaler requesting an increase in supply, who in turn will need to contact the manufacturer.

If you find that there are repeated difficulties in obtaining sufficient quantities of a particular product in your area, please contact your local pharmacy directly as they may be able to help by reporting back through [PSNC website](#).

NB: This does not apply to products where there are known shortages due to manufacturing issues.

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