

Medicines

Optimisation news headlines

February 2017

Improving adherence with amitriptyline – avoid high doses initially

Amitriptyline is first line for the treatment of neuropathic pain for patients in whom paracetamol alone is not enough to control symptoms. Although the daily dose can go as high as 100mg, the recommended starting dose in the chronic pain guidelines is 10mg daily and some clinicians suggest initiating at 5mg a day. Whilst starting at a higher dose might provide a faster onset of relief from symptoms it can also result in development of intolerable side effects and reluctance for the patient to continue with treatment. If needed, upwards titration of the dose should be by increments of 5-10mg at intervals of 2 weeks to achieve maximum effect. Effective use of amitriptyline can avoid escalation to other potent and potentially addictive agents.

Haelan tape

This brand has been discontinued but the generic version is still available. To ensure that any prescriptions for this product can be dispensed please prescribe as fludroxycortide 4micrograms/cm² tape 7.5cm x 20cm.

Hampshire Infant Feeding Guidelines

These guidelines were written by the prescribing support dietitian for North Hampshire and West Hampshire CCGs in collaboration with paediatricians and paediatric dietitians in Hampshire, health visiting teams from Southern Health and Solent, and the 8 CCGs across Hampshire. They provide comprehensive information on appropriate prescribing of specialist infant formulae and can be broken down into three sections; prescribing, pathways and resources. Page 5 is particularly relevant to primary care. The full guideline can be found on the [West Hampshire CCG website](#).

MHRA Drug Safety update

Hyoscine butylbromide (Buscopan) injection

This agent has been associated with serious side effects associated including tachycardia, hypotension, and anaphylaxis. It should be used with caution in patients with pre-existing cardiac disease and is contraindicated in patients with tachycardia.

Opinion is being sought from the specialists to determine whether the current guidance in the palliative care handbook requires any amendment in light of this alert.

OTC products

Over The Counter, (OTC), products are intended for direct sale to the public. This enables people to self-medicate for minor injuries and illnesses prior to seeking further medical help should the problem continue or worsen.

The majority of these items are available in small quantities as a generic product at a very low price and provide easy access to remedies for people to obtain immediate alleviation of symptoms. If patients need chronic treatment with items that cannot be purchased in large quantities, for example long term regular paracetamol, there is a case for these being provided on prescription. However the majority of OTC medicines should be exactly that and should not appear on prescription. Some specific examples follow overleaf:



	OTC Product	Active ingredient	OTC Price (approximate)	Comment
Many products for allergic conditions are prescribed under an OTC brand name. This means that a premium price is paid for them on prescription and the patient often receives very small quantities. These products should be prescribed by the generic name using the standard pack size.	Beconase Hayfever Aqueous nasal spray	Beclometasone 50microgram/dose	£9.19 / 180dose	OTC or prescribe beclometasone aqueous nasal spray; £2.10 / 200dose
	Zirtek Allergy Relief tablets	Cetirizine 10mg	£3.79 / 7 tablets People can purchase a pack of 30 cetirizine 10mg tablets for around £2	OTC or prescribe as cetirizine 10mg Drug Tariff price; 76p / 30tablets
	Benadryl Allergy Liquid release	Cetirizine 10mg	£2.91 / 7capsules	OTC or prescribe cetirizine 10mg tablets
High cost OTC brands of standard analgesic agents. The generic versions of these agents can be purchased over the counter at much lower cost.	Panadol Advance tablets	Paracetamol 500mg	£5.15/ 100tablets	Prescribe paracetamol 500mg tablets £2.19/100
	Nurofen tablet Nurofen liquid capsule	Ibuprofen 200mg Ibuprofen 200mg	£2.49 / 16 tablets £2.99/ 10capsule	OTC or prescribe as generic ibuprofen. Drug Tariff price; 92p / 24 tablets
Items purely intended for temporary self-help.	Lemsip Max	Paracetamol 1g plus phenylephrine 12.2mg	£3.85 / 10sachets	(NB: Ingredients vary with other Lemsip products)
Food supplements are not licensed medicinal products. Licensed treatments are available when clinically indicated.	Spatone sachets	Iron-rich water <i>One daily 20ml sachet contains 5mg iron from ferrous sulphate</i>	£5.87/28	OTC supplement only <i>Treatment dose for iron deficiency is 120-180mg of iron daily</i>
	Liq-10 oral syrup	Co-enzyme Q10 50mg / 5ml	Varies depending on supplier. Prescription cost: £78.00 / 500ml	Prescribing not supported by the District Prescribing Committee
And some more unusual examples. Special orders can incur additional costs.	Elena Trinity Soap + Shampoo	"Luxury product for people prone to eczema/psoriasis"	£20.60 / 200ml	£39.00 / 200ml
	MooGoo Skin Milk Udder Cream	'Moisturiser'	£8.00 / 120ml	Use formulary emollients

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