



Health Newsflash

New Drugs and Indications Reviewed at the November 2003 DEC Meeting



The Drug Evaluation Committee (DEC) of ESI Canada conducts a monthly review of all new drugs receiving their Notices of Compliance from Health Canada to ascertain their places in therapy and their possible impacts on the private payer sector. Pricing information is included when the drug is available for sale. However, availability of a drug does not immediately follow its approval by Health Canada. This issue is provided to our insurance customers as a value-added service. We hope you will find this Health Newsflash informative, timely, and useful.

New Brand Drugs:

Axert [*Axe-ert*] (6.25 and 12.5mg almotriptan) is available as oral tablets by Janssen-Ortho Inc. It treats migraine headaches and is taken orally at the onset of a migraine attack. Axert belongs to the triptan drug class and is similar to Imitrex. Pricing is not available at this time; however, as the fifth triptan to market, Axert will be priced similar to the other drugs in this class. It is anticipated that the impact to drug plans will be minimal.*

Fasturtec [*Fas-tour-teck*] (1.5 mg/vial rasburicase) is available as an injection into a vein by Sanofi-Synthelabo Canada Inc. It is used in patients undergoing cancer treatment to prevent potentially fatal kidney damage. This drug is used in hospital settings with no impact anticipated on private drug plans.**

Vivaxim [*Vev-axe-imm*] (25 mcg combined purified polysaccharide typhoid + 160 unit inactivated hepatitis A per 0.5 ml) is available as an injection in the muscle by Aventis Pasteur Limited. It is a combination vaccine for hepatitis A and typhoid fever. Vaccines against hepatitis A and typhoid fever, most prevalent in developing countries, are already available separately. Vivaxim is the first combination product. Impact to plans is estimated to be minimal with a potential cost savings in fewer dispensing fees paid.*

New Generic Drug:

Paroxetine [*Pair-ox-e-teen*] (10, 20 and 30 mg) is available as oral tablets by four generic pharmaceutical companies (Apotex, Genpharm, Pharmascience and Ratiopharm). As of November 2003, Paxil, a drug for depression, lost its patent and many generic versions came on the Canadian market. Paxil has the fourth highest cost in ESI Canada's database with 1.88% of total drug expenditures. The average price of Paxil 20 mg is \$1.87. The price of Genpharm's product (Gen-paroxetine) is \$1.20, while the other generics are \$1.12. Gen-paroxetine is priced slightly higher because it was the first one approved by Health Canada. A potential exists to decrease costs for this drug by approximately 36-38%, if all patients were converted to generic paroxetine.

New Indications:

For the drugs listed below, we anticipate that their new indications will have minimal impact on private drug plans.

Gleevec [*Glea-veck*] (50 and 100 mg imatinib mesylate) available as oral tablets by Novartis Canada Inc. has a new indication for treatment of newly diagnosed Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML). It was previously indicated for use in patients in chronic phase CML after treatment failure of interferon-alpha therapy. The incidence of CML in the general population is very low, with 1 to 2 cases per 100,000 people. Gleevec currently accounts for approximately 0.2% of total drug expenditures in the ESI Canada database.

Redefining Health Claims Solutions

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Redefining Health Claims Solutions

Valtrex [*Val-trecks*] (500 and 1000 mg valacyclovir) available as oral tablets by GlaxoSmithKline Inc. has two new indications and a product monograph revision. Valtrex was previously indicated for recurrent episodes of genital herpes only. The 500 mg strength can now be used for recurrent genital herpes in HIV infected individuals. Furthermore, both strengths are now indicated for the treatment of an initial episode of genital herpes. Valtrex accounts for 76% of drug expenditures in the Herpes treatment drug class, and only 0.4% of total drug expenditures.

Pantoloc [*Pan-toe-lock*] (20 mg pantoprazole) available as oral enteric-coated tablets (dissolved in the intestine) by Solvay Pharma Inc. has a new indication for the prevention of gastrointestinal lesions induced by non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in patients requiring continuous NSAID therapy. Similar drugs in this class, such as Prevacid, already have this indication. In addition, Pantoloc is indicated for the treatment of conditions where a reduction in stomach acid secretion is required and is also used to eradicate, in combination with certain antibiotics, *Helicobacter pylori* (bacteria) associated duodenal ulcers. Pantoloc has a 23% market share in drug expenditures for the Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI) drug class, and 1.6% in total drug expenditures.

Pariet [*Pair-ee-ette*] (10 and 20 mg rabeprazole) available as oral enteric-coated tablets by Janssen-Ortho Inc. has a new indication as part of the treatment, which includes certain antibiotics, for the eradication of *Helicobacter pylori* (bacteria) associated with duodenal ulcers. Similar drugs in this class such as Losec and Prevacid already have this indication. Pariet is also indicated in the treatment of conditions where a reduction in stomach acid is required. Pariet accounts for 1.9% of drug expenditures in the Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI) drug class, and only 0.14% in total drug expenditures.

*** Minimal Impact**

1. The estimated cost of the new drug is similar to existing drugs and the new drug is likely to become one of a number of existing drugs used for the medical condition (shifting of market share) or,
2. The estimated cost of the new drug is similar to existing drugs and the new drug has low utilization due to either its place in therapy, its relation to other drugs or the prevalence of the medical condition.

**** No impact**

1. New drug classified as a hospital drug or a diagnostic which has no impact in the private sector.

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