



Health Newsflash

New Drugs and Indications Reviewed at the August 2004 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 Drugs and Selected Products

New Products:

Risperdal Consta [*Riz-per-doll-Con-sta*] (25, 37.5 and 50 mg/vial of risperidone) is available as an injection into the muscle by Janssen-Ortho Inc. Risperidone was previously only available in oral formulations (tablets and liquid). This new long-acting product is used in patients with schizophrenia, a serious mental disorder characterized by loss of contact with reality, hallucinations, delusions, and disrupted work and social functioning. The disease affects 1 in 100 people and usually presents between 15 and 25 years of age. Risperdal Consta is the first injectable product in its class to treat the symptoms of schizophrenia and is given once every 2 weeks. Therapy requires patients to be started on oral therapy, and if tolerated, they can be switched to Risperdal Consta, thus improving compliance which is essential for long-term treatment of this disease. As a new formulation of an existing drug, it is anticipated some patients will switch from oral therapy to Risperdal Consta. Pricing is currently unavailable in Canada, however it's AWP (average wholesale price) in the U.S. ranges from \$266 to \$533US compared to \$126 to \$190US for 2 weeks of oral treatment. The cost of oral therapy ranges from \$65 to \$98CDN for the same treatment duration. The impact to employer plans is anticipated to be minimal.

New indications:

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

Pariet [*Pair-ree-ef*] (10 and 20 mg of rabeprazole) is available as oral tablets by Janssen-Ortho Inc. Pariet belongs to the proton pump inhibitor (PPI) drug class and is now indicated for treating the symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). This chronic disease presents most commonly as heartburn and is reported to affect 5 to 7% of the population. Other PPIs such as Losec, Pantoloc and Prevacid are also approved for this indication. The recommended dose is 10 to 20 mg daily for 4 weeks. Pariet is as effective in GERD as other PPIs however, it is priced significantly lower. Equivalent 20 mg doses of Pariet and Losec are \$1.30 and \$2.20, respectively. Based upon ESI Canada data, Pariet has approximately 4.3% of the PPI market and can provide savings to employer plans should members use it in place of other drugs in the class.

Proscar [*Proz-car*] (5 mg of finasteride) is available as oral tablets by Merck Frosst Canada. Approved for treating benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate, Proscar can now be combined with another drug, doxazosin, to control the progression of this condition. The recommended doses are 5 mg of Proscar and 4 to 8 mg of doxazosin daily. BPH affects approximately 25% of men over 40 years of age and increases to 33% over 65 years of age. Long-term therapy with Proscar and doxazosin reduced progression of BPH significantly more than using either agent alone. The daily cost of therapy is \$1.63 and \$0.60 for Proscar and generic doxazosin (4 mg), respectively. Proscar represented 0.9% of total drug expenditure for ESI Canada in 2003 and was ranked 150 in total ingredient cost paid. As such, it is anticipated that this new indication will have minimal impact to drug plans.

Optimizing the Value of Drug and Dental Benefits

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Arimidex [*Ah-rim-meh-decks*] (1 mg of anastrozole) is available as oral tablets by AstraZeneca Canada Inc. Arimidex was previously indicated for treating advanced breast cancer in postmenopausal women. It is now approved for use in the early stages of breast cancer under specific conditions. Taken once a day, Arimidex has shown improved survival rates and a better safety profile than tamoxifen, the only other oral agent in Canada approved for this type of cancer. The cost per day for Arimidex is \$4.95, which is significantly higher than the daily therapy of tamoxifen at \$0.35. An ESI Canada budget impact analysis estimates this new indication will have a 0.28% increase to drug expenditure if 50% of patients were to switch from generic tamoxifen to Arimidex. This is considered a minimal impact to overall employer drug expenditure.

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**Impact Statements*

Minimal Impact

- 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,
- 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.

Intermediate Impact

- New drug has an estimated higher than average cost compared to drugs used for the medical condition or,
- New drug has an anticipated higher than average utilization due to either its place in therapy, its relation to other drugs or the prevalence of medical condition.

No impact

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

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