



Health Newsflash

New Drugs and Indications Reviewed at the June 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

Ciprodex [*Sip-roh-decks*] (0.3% of ciprofloxacin and 0.1% of dexamethasone) is available as a combination antibiotic and anti-inflammatory ear drops by Alcon Canada Inc. It is used for treating patients with acute outer ear infections (swimmer's ear) or acute middle ear infections with ear tubes. Middle ear infections are commonly treated with oral antibiotics. Ciprodex is the only ear drop approved to treat middle ear infections. It is priced at \$25.20 per bottle compared to \$13 to \$21 for other ear drops in the class and \$10 to \$30 for oral antibiotics. It is anticipated that Ciprodex will compete with these existing treatments and as such, will have minimal impact on employer drug plans.

Nuvaring [*New-vah-ring*] (11.4 mg and 2.6 mg of etonogestrel and ethinyl estradiol) is available as a contraceptive vaginal ring by Organon Canada Ltd. It is self-inserted into the vagina every 4 weeks releasing its contents, thus preventing pregnancy. The ring is kept in place for 3 weeks followed by a ring-free week to mimic the menstrual cycle. Its efficacy is similar to birth control pills and patches and may be more convenient to use. While pricing information is not available, it is anticipated that Nuvaring will be priced at a premium to birth control pills and similarly to patches (approximately \$25 per cycle). On June 23, 2004, the Common Drug Review (CDR) Directorate released its formulary listing recommendation for Evra, the only marketed contraceptive patch in Canada. The CDR recommended that Evra not be listed on publicly-funded drug plans because it is more expensive, of similar efficacy, and was associated with higher discontinuation rates compared to birth control pills. Nuvaring will also be reviewed by the CDR. As coverage for non-oral contraceptive products varies within the private sector, the impact on drug plans will depend on specific plan design features and contract wording.

Pegasys RBV [*Peg-ah-sis Arr-bee-vee*] (180 mcg/ml and 200 mg of peginterferon alfa-2a and ribavirin) is available from Hoffman-La Roche Limited. Previously marketed without the ribavirin component, Pegasys RBV combines both the peginterferon alfa-2a, which is an injection under the skin, and ribavirin, an oral tablet, in one convenient package. Pegasys RBV is used for treating chronic (long-term) hepatitis C in adults with or without cirrhosis (liver damage). Hepatitis C is an inflammation of the liver caused by a blood borne infection of the hepatitis C virus. Approximately 0.8 to 1% of the Canadian population contracts hepatitis C annually. Individuals may not show symptoms of the disease in its early to intermediate stages; therefore, 80% progress to chronic hepatitis C. Without treatment, chronic hepatitis C can lead to permanent liver damage which greatly reduces a person's quality of life. The dosing of Pegasys RBV varies; however, the most common dosing regimen in Canada is one 48-week course at approximately \$19,000. Priced similarly to other comparable therapies, it is anticipated that Pegasys RBV will compete for market share rather than expand the market. This new formulation is expected to have minimal impact on employer drug plans.

Vigamox [*Vih-gah-mocks*] (0.5% of moxifloxacin hydrochloride) is available as antibiotic eye drops by Alcon Canada Inc. It will be the third antibiotic eye drop in its class for treating of bacterial conjunctivitis (pink eye). Pink eye is a highly contagious condition and usually resolves within one to two weeks without treatment, and within 48 to 72 hours with treatment. Vigamox is priced at \$12 per bottle compared to \$10.24 per bottle for

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Ciloxan and Ocuflax (two other drugs in the class). Vigamox may be more convenient since it is given less often than the other drugs (3 times vs. 4 times daily). It is anticipated that this drug will compete with others in its class rather than expand the overall market, resulting in minimal impact on employer drug plans.

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

Authors: Rajib Ghatak, Pharmacy student

Johnny Ma, B.Sc.Pharm.

Editor: Steven Semelman, Pharm.D.

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