



Health Newsflash

New Drugs and Indications Reviewed at the January 2005 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.

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New Drugs:

Ebixa [*Ebb-bicks-ah*] (10 mg memantine) is available from Lundbeck Canada Inc. as an oral tablet to treat Alzheimer's disease (AD). It acts differently than other drugs currently on the market, such as Aricept, Exelon, and Reminyl. These drugs are approved for use in mild to moderate AD, while Ebixa is approved for moderate to severe AD. Ebixa was approved by Health Canada only as monotherapy at a dose of 10 mg twice daily. Combination with other AD drugs continues to be studied. The incidence of AD increases with age (1 in 10,000 under 65 years old and 1 in 20 over 65 years old). Approximately 50% of AD patients treated at home and 89% of AD patients treated in hospital or other patient-care facilities have moderate to severe AD. Ebixa is priced similarly to other AD drugs at \$4.59 per day. The majority of the impact will be seen on public sector plans, resulting in minimal impact on employer drug plans.

Telzir [*Tell-zeah*] (700 mg or 50 mg/ml fosamprenavir) is available from GlaxoSmithKline Inc. as an oral tablet or liquid suspension. It is one of a number of drugs in its class (protease inhibitors) for treating human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infected adults. It is given twice daily and must be taken in combination with another drug (ritonavir) at low doses to be effective. Most common side effects are rash, headaches, and nausea. It is anticipated that Telzir will have a minimal impact on employer drug plans.

Yasmin [*Yaz-min*] (3 mg drospirenone and 0.03 mg ethinyl estradiol) is available from Berlex Canada Inc. as a combination oral contraceptive (OC) tablet. The new progestin component, (drospirenone) closely resembles natural progesterone which counteracts bloating and weight gain caused by the estrogen component. This combination tablet results in fewer side effects compared to other OCs. Yasmin is similar in efficacy and priced comparatively to other OCs like Marvelon, Alesse or Loestrin, at approximately \$11.60 per cycle (month). It is anticipated that it will have a minimal impact on employer drug plans.

Ovidrel [*Oh-veh-drell*] (250 mcg choriogonadotropin) is available from Serono Canada Inc. as an injection given under the skin. It is the first genetically engineered hormone in its class (infertility agents). There are several similar drugs available for treating infertility, such as Pergonal, Pregnyl, and Profasi; however, due to Ovidrel's production process, it is higher in purity than these drugs. The cost of Ovidrel is not known as of this publication date. Employers having restrictions and/or limitations on infertility treatment coverage will have minimal impact to their drug plans.

Cipralext [*Sip-raal-lecks*] (5 mg, 10 mg, 15 mg or 20 mg escitalopram) is available from Lundbeck Canada Inc. as an oral tablet. It is a new member of the SSRI drug class for treating depression. Cipralext is similar to other SSRIs (e.g., Celexa-citalopram), but is more selective in targeting certain parts of the brain for treatment. The clinical benefits of this selectivity are unknown. The recommended dosage is one tablet daily. All other drugs in this class have generics available on the market. It is anticipated that Cipralext will have a minimal impact on employer drug plans.

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Strattera [*Strat-tear-rah*] (10 mg, 18 mg, 25 mg, 40 mg or 60 mg atomoxetine) is available from Eli Lilly Canada Inc. as an oral capsule. It is a new non-stimulant drug approved for treating Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in patients over 6 years old (children and adults). It is taken once or twice daily. Stimulant drugs (e.g., Ritalin and Concerta) are considered first-line agents, but are classified as controlled substances due to their abuse potential. Strattera is the first non-stimulant drug approved for sale in Canada. It is priced at \$3.98 per capsule which is higher than current treatments (from \$0.35 for generic Ritalin to \$3.38 for Concerta). Overall, the impact on employer drug plans is anticipated to be minimal.

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New Dosage Forms:

Prevacid [*Prev-ah-sid*] (lansaprazole oral suspension-15 mg and 30 mg/dose and intravenous injection-30 mg/vial) are available from Tap Pharmaceuticals Inc. Prevacid, like Losec, is a well-known Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI) used for treating gastro-intestinal disorders like ulcers and reflux. Previously, it was only available in capsules. The oral liquid formulation is the first in its class used for patients who have difficulty swallowing capsules and the new intravenous (IV) formulation, injected in the vein, is for patients who are unable to take medication by mouth. The oral suspension can be used for patients greater than one year old. Prevacid oral suspension is anticipated to have a minimal impact on employer drug plans. Prevacid IV is an alternative for the short-term treatment of severe reflux disorder. Patients are switched to oral therapy once they are able to take drugs by mouth. Prevacid IV will be used in hospital and has been added to ESI Canada Hospital Drug Program (HDP); therefore, it will have no impact on employer drug plans using the HDP.

New indications:

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

Ketek [*Key-teck*] (400 mg telithromycin) is available from Aventis Pharma Inc. as an oral tablet. Ketek is an antibiotic that was previously indicated for only treating bacterial pneumonia, bronchitis, and throat infections. It can now be used for treating acute bacterial sinusitis (infection of the sinus cavities) as well. The recommended dosage is two tablets once daily for five to ten days. Ketek is one of many antibiotics available for treating acute sinusitis.

Zyprexa IM [*Zeye-precks-ah*] (10 mg/vial olanzapine) is available from Eli Lilly Canada Inc. as an injection into the muscle. Zyprexa IM was previously used only for rapid control of agitation in patients with schizophrenia and related psychotic disorders, and now it can be used for bipolar mania as well. Zyprexa IM is the first antipsychotic to have this indication.

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.

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Impact Statements (Continued)

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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