Product Update

Advisories

Health Canada has suspended authorization of **Avastin** (bevacizumab) for use in the treatment of metastatic breast cancer. Based on careful review, Health Canada has concluded that Avastin has not been shown to be safe and effective in this use. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd. has been directed to remove this indication from Avastin's label, and the company has indicated it will comply. This decision does *not* affect Health Canada's authorization of Avastin for other types of cancer.

Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd has also updated the safety information in the **Avastin** product monograph regarding a higher incidence of new cases of ovarian failure observed in premenopausal women treated with Avastin (bevacizumab) in a phase III trial comparing mFOLFOX6 versus mFOLFOX6 plus Avastin as adjuvant treatment in patients with Stage II and III colon cancer. The company does not authorize the combination of Avastin and mFOLFOX6 as adjuvant treatment in patients with colon cancer.

Health Canada informs consumers and health care professionals that it is reviewing the dose-related heart risk of **citalopram**. Recent data suggest that high doses of citalopram (60 mg/day) can potentially lead to serious and possibly fatal arrhythmias by affecting the electrical activity of the heart. Once the review is complete, Health Canada will communicate its findings to consumers

and health care professionals.

CooperVision has issued a voluntary recall of a limited number of **encore100** toric and **encore100** sphere **contact lenses** due to the presence of residue (silicone oil) on the lenses that may result in hazy vision, discomfort, severe eye pain or eye injuries requiring medical treatment. Consumers can check to see if their contact lenses are affected by this recall by entering the lot number at www.coopervision.com/international-recall/ca/en. Consumers are instructed to stop wearing the affected lenses immediately and to contact their eye care professional for advice.

Health Canada alerts consumers and health care professionals that the use of **fluoroquinolone antibiotics** in patients with myasthenia gravis may worsen symptoms such as breathing problems or muscle weakness. Health Canada has instructed Canadian manufacturers of fluoroquinolone antibiotics to update the labelling in the product monograph to include a warning on this risk. A complete list of fluoroquinolone antibiotics available in Canada is available at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/_2011/2011_147-eng.php#list.

Boehringer Ingelheim Ltd. and Sanofi-aventis Canada Inc. alert consumers and health care professionals of the risk of medication errors associated with brand name confusion involving **Pradax** (dabigatran etexilate) and **Plavix** (clopidogrel bisulfate). Since January 2011, there have been 5 cases

of medication errors associated with the name confusion within Canada, including 1 case of non-serious bleeding after a medical procedure. Both companies are looking to find ways to mitigate the risk of medication errors related to the name confusion. For now, health care professionals are encouraged to include the generic name when referring to either medication. Spelling the name may be helpful for verbal prescriptions or medication reconciliation.

Eli Lilly Canada Inc. informs consumers and health care professionals of reports of increases in heart rate and blood pressure with **Strattera** (atomoxetine) in a recent analysis of company-sponsored clinical trials in 8417 pediatric patients. A similar effect has been observed in adult ADHD patients. Based on these data, the safety information in the product monograph has been updated with the following recommendations: 1) Strattera is contraindicated in patients with severe heart-related disorders; 2) use Strattera with caution in patients with QT prolongation and in those whose underlying medical condition could be worsened by increases in blood pressure or heart rate (e.g., patients with hypertension, cardiovascular or cerebrovascular disease); 3) monitor heart rate and blood pressure before treatment with Strattera, after a dose increase and periodically during treatment.

Eli Lilly Canada Inc. informs consumers and health care professionals that **Xigris** (drotrecogin alfa, activated) has been withdrawn worldwide, effective immediately.

Results from the PROWESS-SHOCK trial showed no benefit for patients receiving Xigris compared to those who did not receive it. Hospitals and pharmacies are instructed to return any strength or package size of Xigris to their suppliers. The Lilly Canada Customer Response Center at 1-888-545-5972 may be accessed for further queries.

New products

Actonel DR (risedronate sodium enteric-coated, delayed-release 35 mg tablets by Warner Chilcott Canada Co.) is indicated for the treatment of postmenopausal osteoporosis. Because a higher incidence of upper abdominal pain was observed in patients taking Actonel DR in a fasted state, advise patients to take Actonel DR in the morning with breakfast. Instruct patients to swallow the tablets whole, while in an upright position, with at least 120 mL of water and not to lie down for at least 30 minutes after administration. Advise patients to take their calcium supplements at a different time as they may interfere with Actonel DR's absorption. The recommended dose of Actonel DR is 35 mg, once a week.

Banzel (rufinamide 100 mg, 200 mg, 400 mg tablets by Eisai Ltd.) is indicated for adjunctive treatment of seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome in children ≥ 4 years and adults. Contraindications include patients with familial short QT syndrome, as well as a history or family history of this. Common side effects include somnolence and vomiting. Banzel is not

metabolized by CYP 450 and has little effect on the pharmacokinetics of other antiepileptic drugs; however, potent CYP 450 enzyme inducers, e.g., carbamazepine, may increase the clearance of Banzel. Depending on the dose, valproate can significantly increase plasma concentration of Banzel. Banzel may decrease the effectiveness of oral contraceptives; advise women of childbearing age to use additional nonhormonal forms of contraception. Banzel is taken with food. The initial daily dose is 200 mg taken in 2 equally divided doses in patients who weigh <30 kg (maximum daily dose is 1300 mg) and 400 mg in 2 equally divided doses for patients who weigh ≥30 kg (maximum daily dose 30–50 kg: 1800 mg, 50.1–70 kg: 2400 mg; ≥70.1 kg: 3200 mg). Tablets can be halved or crushed.

Brilinta (ticagrelor 90 mg tablets by AstraZeneca Canada Inc.) in combination with ASA (75 to 150 mg daily) is a selective, reversible inhibitor of ADP P2Y₁₂ on platelet receptors and is indicated for the secondary prevention of atherothrombotic events in patients with acute coronary syndromes who are to be managed medically and those who are to be managed with percutaneous coronary intervention (with or without stent) and/or coronary artery bypass graft. Brilinta is not a prodrug. Brilinta may cause mild to moderate dyspnea, which often resolves with continued treatment. The loading dose of Brilinta is 180 mg and the maintenance dose is 90 mg twice daily.

Edurant (rilpivirine 25 mg tablets by Janssen Inc.), in com-

bination with other antiretroviral agents, is indicated for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in antiretroviral treatment-naïve adult patients. Patients with baseline levels of HIV-1 RNA <100,000 copies/mL may benefit from treatment with this non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor; virologic failures were observed in patients with baseline levels of HIV-1 RNA >100,000 copies/mL. Contraindications include concurrent use of CYP3A inducers or medications that increase gastric pH. Edurant may prolong the QT interval. Minimal lipid changes were observed. The recommended dose of Edurant is 25 mg once daily with food of better absorption. Advise patients not to take Edurant with or after protein drinks, as a significant reduction in rilpivirine plasma levels is seen. Avoid grapefruit or grapefruit juice with Edurant.

Incivek (telaprevir 375 mg tablets by Vertex Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc.), in combination with peginterferon alfa and ribavirin, is indicated for the treatment of genotype 1 chronic hepatitis C in adult patients with compensated liver disease, including cirrhosis, who are treatment-naïve or who have previously been treated with interferon-based treatment, including prior null responders, partial responders and relapsers. The combination offers a higher cure rate and shortens the duration of treatment. Incivek interacts with a list of medications (check product monograph).

Advise women of childbearing potential to use 2 forms of nonhormonal contraception;

this also applies if the male partner is taking ribavirin. The dose is 750 mg 3 times daily, every 7 to 9 hours, with food, in combination with peginterferon alfa plus ribavirin for the first 12 weeks, then peginterferon and ribavirin is continued for an additional 12 or 36 weeks, depending on response history and viral response.

Onsolis (fentanyl citrate buccal soluble film by Valeant Canada) is indicated for the management of breakthrough pain in cancer patients ≥18 years who are already receiving, and who are tolerant of, opioid therapy for their persistent baseline cancer pain. CYP3A4 inhibitors may increase fentanyl exposure.

The starting dose is 200 mcg for all patients with an interval of 4 hours between doses. The dose can be titrated by 200 mcg until adequate pain relief is achieved (maximum 1200 mg/dose). Instruct patients to use a dry hand to press the pink side of the film to the inside of the wet cheek for 5 seconds until it sticks. Caution patients that chewing or swallowing the film may decrease the amount of fentanyl absorbed. Advise patients to wait at least 5 minutes after the application before drinking and until the film dissolves before eating. The film dissolves within 15 to 30 minutes after application.

Trajenta (linagliptin 5 mg tablets by Boehringer Ingelheim Ltd.), a DPP-4 inhibitor, is indicated in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus to improve glycemic control in conjunction with diet and exercise in patients for whom metformin is inappropriate due to contraindication or intolerance. It is

also indicated in combination with metformin, sulfonylurea or both in patients who have not achieved adequate glycemic control with these medications when combined with diet and exercise. The dose is 5 mg once daily. No dose adjustment is needed for patients with mild to moderate renal impairment; Trajenta is not recommended in patients with severe renal insufficiency, including those with ESRD. Hypoglycemia was frequently reported in patients on triple therapy.

Victrelis (boceprevir 200 mg capsules by Merck Canada Inc.) is indicated for the treatment of chronic hepatitis C genotype 1 infection in combination with peginterferon alfa and ribavirin in adults patients (≥18 years) with compensated liver disease, including cirrhosis, who are previously untreated or who have failed previous therapy. Victrelis interacts with a list of drugs. Advise women of childbearing potential to use 2 forms of nonhormonal contraception; this also applies if the male partner is taking ribavirin. The dose is 800 mg every 7 to 9 hours with food starting on week 5 of peginterferon plus ribavirin. The total duration of therapy is between 28 and 44 weeks, depending on response history and viral response. Refer to the product monograph for details. Common side effects are fatigue, anemia, nausea, headache and dysgeusia. Monitor complete blood counts as neutropenia and thrombocytopenia may occur. Victrelis Triple is also available — a 2-week package that contains boceprevir, ribavirin and peginterferon alfa-2 b.

New indications

Abilify (aripiprazole by Bristol-Myers Squibb) is now approved for the treatment of schizophrenia in adolescents 15 to 17 years.

Botox (botulinum toxin type A by Allergan Inc.) is now approved for the prophylaxis of headaches in adults with chronic migraine.

Lucentis (ranibizumab by Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada Inc.) is now approved for the treatment of visual impairment due to macular edema secondary to retinal vein occlusion.

Sutent (sunitinib malate by Pfizer Canada Inc.) is now approved for the treatment of patients with unresectable locally advanced or metastatic, well-differentiated pancreatic neuroendocrine tumors whose disease is progressive.

New generics

Amlodipine/atorvastatin (tablets of all strengths) are now available from GenMed. This is a new alternative to Caduet.

Betahistine dihydrochloride 16 mg and 24 mg tablets are now available from Cobalt Pharmaceuticals Company. This is a new alternative to Serc.

Carbamazepine 100 mg/5 mL suspension is now available from Taro Pharmaceuticals Inc. This is a new alternative to Tegretol suspension.

Ciclopirox nail lacquer 8% topical solution is now available from Taro Pharmaceuticals Inc. This is a new alternative to

Penlac nail lacquer.

Clindamycin 1% topical solution is now available from Taro Pharmaceuticals Inc. This is a new alternative to Dalacin T.

Hydromorphone 1 mg, 2 mg, 4 mg and 8 mg tablets are now available from Teva Canada. This is a new alternative to Dilaudid.

Latanoprost 50 mcg/mL ophthalmic solution is now available from Apotex Inc. This is a new alternative to Xalatan.

Montelukast 4 mg and 5 mg chewable tablets and 10 mg tablets are now available from Pharmascience, Sandoz Canada Inc. and Teva Canada. Montelukast 4 mg oral granules are available from Sandoz Canada Inc.

Raloxifene 60 mg tablets are now available from Pharmascience Inc. This is a new alternative to Evista.

Valacyclovir 1000 mg caplets are now available from Apotex Inc. This is a new alternative to Valtrex.

Discontinued products

Atenolol 50 mg and 100 mg tablets from Sandoz Canada have been discontinued.

Butorphanol 10 mg/mL nasal spray and 25 mg tablets from Pharmascience Inc. have been discontinued.

Desocort lotion 0.05% from Galderma Canada has been discontinued. Desocort ointment 0.05% is available.

Minocin 50 mg capsules from Stiefel have been discontinued.

Rhotral 100 mg, 200 mg and 400 mg tablets from Sandoz Canada have been discontinued.

Vagifem 25 mcg vaginal tablets from Novo Nordisk have been discontinued. Vagifem 10 mcg is still available.

New strength

Intelence (etravirine by Janssen) is now available in 200 mg tablets; also available in 100 mg tablets.

Onglyza (saxagliptin by Bristol-Myers Squibb-Astra-Zeneca) is now available in 2.5 mg tablets for once-daily use in patients with moderate to severe renal impairment or in patients with ESRD requiring hemodialysis. Onglyza is also available in 5 mg tablets. ■

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