BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois

FDA Updates – Summer 2011

In order to help health care providers stay up-to-date on the latest U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) news, we have listed a number of recent newsworthy FDA News Releases, Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting, new drug approvals and withdrawals, etc. We hope you find the information useful.

Generic Drug Information:

- **Bromfenac (XIBROM) (May 16, 2011):** Mylan Pharmaceuticals Inc. has launched bromfenac ophthalmic solution, 0.09% (twice daily administration). This product is the first generic version of ISTA's *Xibrom* ophthalmic solution for the treatment of postoperative inflammation in patients who have undergone cataract extraction.
- **Budesonide extended release 24 hr caps (ENDOCORT EC) (May 16, 2011):** Mylan's Abbreviated New Drug Application (NDA) to market a generic version of ENTOCORT EC was approved by the FDA on May 16, 2011.
- **Levofloxacin (LEVAQUIN) (June 20, 2011):** The FDA has approved the first generic versions of *Levaquin* (levofloxacin), a fluoroquinolone antibiotic indicated for infections caused by susceptible strains of certain microorganisms. Levofloxacin must be dispensed with a patient Medication Guide describing the drug's uses and warnings.

New Drug Information:

- **VICTRELIS (boceprevir) (May 16, 2011):** The FDA approved *Victrelis* (boceprevir), an HCV protease inhibitor, in combination with peginterferon alfa and ribavirin, for the treatment of chronic hepatitis C genotype 1 infection, in adult patients with compensated liver disease (including cirrhosis) who have not yet been treated or who have not responded to previous interferon and ribavirin therapy.
- **EDURANT (relpivirine) (May 20, 2011):** The FDA has approved *Edurant* (rilpivirine), a nonnucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI), in combination with other antiretroviral drugs for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in adults who have never taken HIV therapy.
- **INCIVEK (Telaprevir) (May 23, 2011):** The FDA has approved Vertex Pharmaceuticals' *Incivek* (telaprevir), a hepatitis C virus protease inhibitor in combination with peginterferon alfa and ribavirin to treat patients with chronic hepatitis C infection who have not received interferon-based drug therapy for their infection or who have not responded adequately to prior therapies.
- **NULOJIX (belatacept) (June 15, 2011):** The FDA approved Nulojix (belatacept) to prevent acute rejection in adult patients who have had a kidney transplant. The drug is approved for use with other immunosuppressants (medications that suppress the immune system)—specifically basiliximab, mycophenolate mofetil, and corticosteroids. Nulojix is a type of drug called a selective T-cell costimulation blocker.
- **ARCAPTA (indacaterol) (July 1, 2011):** The FDA approved Arcapta Neohaler (indacaterol inhalation powder) for the long term, once-daily maintenance bronchodilator treatment of airflow obstruction in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) including chronic bronchitis and/or emphysema. Arcapta Neohaler is a new molecular entity in the beta$_2$-adrenergic agonist class Arcapta Neohaler is not intended to treat asthma or sudden, severe symptoms of COPD.
- **XARELTO (rivaroxaban) (July 5, 2011):** The FDA approved Xarelto (rivaroxaban) to reduce the risk of blood clots, deep vein thrombosis (DVT), and pulmonary embolism (PE) following knee or hip replacement surgery. Xarelto is a pill taken once daily. Those undergoing a knee replacement should take the medication for 12 days and patients undergoing a hip replacement procedure should take Xarelto for 35 days.
- **BRILINTA (ticagrelor) (July 20, 2011):** The FDA approved the blood-thinning drug Brilinta (ticagrelor) to reduce cardiovascular death and heart attack in patients with acute coronary syndromes (ACS). Brilinta has been studied in combination with aspirin and a boxed warning warns that aspirin doses above 100 milligrams per day decrease the effectiveness of the medication. In clinical trials, Brilinta was more effective than Plavix in preventing heart attacks and death, but that advantage was seen with aspirin maintenance doses of 75 to 100 milligrams once daily.

Market Recalls or Withdrawals:

- **Risperdal (risperidone) and Risperidone: Recall – Uncharacteristic Odor (June 20, 2011]:** Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals notified health care professionals and the public of a recall of specific lots of Risperdal (risperidone) 3mg tablets and risperidone 2mg tablets. The recall stems from consumer reports of an uncharacteristic odor thought to be caused by trace amounts of TBA (2,4,6 tribromoanisole). TBA is a byproduct of a chemical preservative sometimes applied to wood often used in the construction of pallets on which materials are transported and stored. While not considered to be toxic, TBA can generate an offensive odor and a small number of patients have reported temporary gastrointestinal symptoms.

FDA Product Safety:

- **FDA announces new safety recommendations for high-dose simvastatin – Increased risk of muscle injury cited (June 8, 2011):** The FDA announced safety label changes for the cholesterol-lowering medication simvastatin because the highest approved dose—80 milligram (mg)—has been associated with an elevated risk of muscle injury or myopathy, particularly during the first 12 months of use. The agency is recommending that simvastatin 80 mg be used only in patients who have been taking this dose for 12 months or more and have not experienced any muscle toxicity. It should not be prescribed to new patients.
- **Ongoing safety review of pioglitazone (June 15, 2011):** The FDA informed the public that use of the diabetes medication Actos (pioglitazone) for more than one year may be associated with an increased risk of bladder cancer. Information about this risk will be added to the *Warnings and Precautions* section of the label for pioglitazone-containing medicines. The patient Medication Guide for these medicines will also be revised to include information on the risk of bladder cancer.
- **Modified Dosing for Erythropoiesis-Stimulating Agents (June 24, 2011):** The FDA has approved modified recommendations for more conservative dosing of erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs) in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD). The new recommendations are based on clinical trials showing that using ESAs to target a hemoglobin level of greater than 11 g/dL in patients with CKD provides no additional benefit other than lower target levels and increases the risk of serious adverse cardiovascular events, such as heart attack or stroke.
- **Ongoing safety review of oral osteoporosis drugs (bisphosphonates) and potential increased risk of esophageal cancer (July 21, 2911):** The FDA is continuing to review data from published studies to evaluate whether use of oral bisphosphonate drugs is associated with an increased risk of cancer of the esophagus. There have been conflicting findings from studies evaluating this risk.
- **Dronedarone (MULTAQ) and increased risk of death and serious cardiovascular adverse events (July 21, 2011):** The FDA is reviewing data from a clinical trial that was evaluating the effects of the antiarrhythmic drug Multaq (dronedarone) in patients with permanent atrial fibrillation. The study was stopped early after the data monitoring committee found a two-fold increase in death, as well as two-fold increases in stroke and hospitalization for heart failure in patients receiving Multaq compared to patients taking a placebo.
- **Serious CNS reactions reported with linezolid and certain anti-psychotic medications (July 26, 2011):** The FDA has received reports of serious central nervous system reactions when the antibacterial drug linezolid (marketed as Zyvox®) is given to patients taking psychiatric medications that work through the serotonin system of the brain (serotonergic psychiatric medications).
- **Fluconazole use during pregnancy may cause birth defects (Aug. 3, 2011):** The FDA informed the public that chronic, high doses (400-800 mg/day) of the antifungal drug Diflucan (fluconazole) may be associated with a rare and distinct set of birth defects in infants whose mothers were treated with the drug during the first trimester of pregnancy.

News & Events:

- **FDA approves Boostrix to prevent tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis in older people (July 8, 2011)**: The FDA approved Boostrix vaccine to prevent tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough) in people ages 65 and older. Currently, there are vaccines approved for the prevention of tetanus and diphtheria that can be used in adults 65 and older. Boostrix, which is given as a single-dose booster shot, is the first vaccine approved to prevent all three diseases in older people.
- **FDA approves Flu vaccines for the 2011- 2012 influenza season (July 18, 2011):** The FDA announced that it had approved the 2011-2012 influenza vaccine formulation for all six manufacturers licensed to produce and distribute influenza vaccine for the United States. The vaccine formulation protects against the three virus strains (A/California, A/Perth, B/Brisbane) that surveillance indicates will be most common during the upcoming season and includes the same virus strains used for the 2010-2011 influenza season.

Lastly, if you would like additional information about these or many other drug related topics (e.g., drug safety, MEDWATCH adverse drug reaction reporting system, market recalls, regulations, educational programs, etc.) make sure that you pay a visit to the FDA's website (www.fda.gov) and click on "Drugs." Better yet, sign up for any number of listservs provided by the FDA to keep up-to-date on the latest happenings in the world of drugs.

References:

1. FDA: FDA Drug Safety Communication**:** FDA announces new safety recommendations for high-dose simvastatin **-** Increased risk of muscle injury cited June 8, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 8, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm258338.htm
2. FDA. FDA Drug Safety Communication: Update to ongoing safety review of Actos (pioglitazone) and increased risk of bladder cancer, June 15, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 5, 2011 at http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm259150.htm
3. FDA. FDA approves Nulojix for kidney transplant patients. June 15, 2011. accessed online on Aug. 5, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm259184.htm
4. FDA. FDA approves first generic versions of the antibiotic levofloxacin to treat certain infections, June 20, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 5, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm259951.htm
5. FDA. FDA Drug Safety Communication: Modified dosing recommendations to improve the safe use of Erythropoiesis-Stimulating Agents (ESAs) in chronic kidney disease (June 24, 2011). Accessed online on Aug. 8, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm259639.htm
6. FDA. FDA News and Events: FDA approves Arcapta Neohaler to treat chronic obstructive pulmonary disease July 1, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 8, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm261649.htm
7. FDA. FDA News and Events: FDA approves Xarelto to reduce risk of blood clots after hip, knee replacements July 5, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 8, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm261839.htm
8. FDA: FDA approves Boostrix to prevent tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis in older people (July 8, 2011). Accessed online on Aug. 8, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm262390.htm
9. FDA. FDA News and Events: FDA approves vaccines for the 2011- 2012 influenza season. July 18, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 8, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm263319.htm
10. FDA. FDA approves blood-thinning drug Brilinta to treat acute coronary syndromes, July 20, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 8, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm263964.htm
11. FDA. FDA Drug Safety Communication: Multaq (dronedarone) and increased risk of death and serious cardiovascular adverse events. July 21, 2011. Accessed online on July 21, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm265305.htm
12. FDA. FDA Drug Safety Communication: Ongoing safety review of oral osteoporosis drugs (bisphosphonates) and potential increased risk of esophageal cancer. July 21, 2011. Accessed online on July 21, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm263320.htm
13. FDA. FDA Drug Safety Communication: Serious CNS reactions possible when linezolid (Zyvox) is given to patients taking certain psychiatric medications. July 26, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 5, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm265305.htm
14. FDA. FDA Drug Safety Communication: Use of long-term, high-dose Diflucan (fluconazole) during pregnancy may be associated with birth defects in infants. Aug. 3, 2011. Accessed online on Aug. 5, 2011, at http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm266030.htm