BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois

FDA Updates – Summer 2010

To say that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been busy lately would appear to be an understatement. In order to help health care providers stay up to date on the latest 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: The following are just a few of the recent FDA approvals for generic alternatives to popular BRAND name medications.

- **Venlafaxine extended-release (EFFEXOR-XR) –** indicated for the treatment of major depressive disorders, Teva will have 180 days of market exclusivity
- **Anastrozole (ARMIDEX) –** indicated for the treatment of breast cancer, multiple manufacturers have generic versions of ARMIDEX
- **Enoxaparin (LOVENOX) –** indicated for the treatment and/or prophylaxis of venous thrombotic events – Sanofi-Aventis, the manufacturer of LOVENOX, has requested a temporary restraining order to halt the release of the generic versions and a decision is not expected until mid-August
- **Naratriptan (AMERGE) –** indicated for the treatment of migraine headaches, multiple generic versions will be available, naratriptan will be the second triptan available as a generic following the launch of sumatriptan (IMITREX)
- **Omeprazole/sodium bicarbonate (ZEGERID) –** indicated for the short term treatment of gastric and duodenal ulcers, Par launched their generic version of ZEGERID in two strengths (20mg/1,100mg, 40mg/1,100mg) and will hold 180 days of market exclusivity, the 20mg/1,100mg strength is also available over-the-counter (OTC) without a prescription
- **Rivastigmine (EXELON) –** indicated for treatment of mild to moderate dementia of the Alzheimer type or secondary to Parkinson's Disease, several manufacturers have launched their generic products in the 1.5mg, 3mg, 4.5mg, and 6mg strengths and share 180 day market exclusivity
- **Pantoprazole (PROTONIX) –** as of July 19, 2010, manufacturers (Sun pharmaceuticals and Teva) with effective FDA approvals can continue to distribute pantoprazole without risk of further financial penalties, there are now three PPIs (omeprazole, pantoprazole, and lansoprazole) available as generic equivalents
- **Drospirenone/ethenyl estradiol (YAZ) –** indicated for the prevention of pregnancy, Teva's generic version (GIANVI) was launched prematurely and is being challenged in court for patent infringement
- **Adapalene gel 0.1% (DIFFERIN)** – indicated for the topical treatment of acne vulgaris, DIFFERIN cream (0.1%) and DIFFERIN gel (0.3%) are available as brand products only
- **Metaxalone (SKELEXIN) –** indicated for the relief of discomforts associated with acute, painful, muscle conditions, Sandoz will hold-180 day marketing exclusivity on this product

New Drug Information:

- **PROLIA (denosumab):** For the treatment of postmenopausal women with osteoporosis at high risk for fracture, defined as a history of osteoporotic fracture, or multiple risk factors for fracture; or patients who have failed or are intolerant to other available osteoporosis therapies. The usual dosage is 60mg subcutaneously every six months. The medication appears as effective as other agents (e.g., bisphosphonates) currently on the market. Safety concerns include: exacerbation of hypocalcemia, increased risk of serious infections, dermatological adverse reactions, and osteonecrosis of the jaw. The estimated annual cost of therapy is roughly $1,600 vs. $400 for generic alendronate. (1)
- **DULERA (mometasone/formoterol):** Combination inhalation product indicated for the treatment of asthma in patients 12 years of age and older. DULERA is similar to ADVAIR (fluticasone/salmeterol) and SYMBICORT (budesonide/formoterol) except that ADVAIR DISKUS has the indication to treat children down to the age of four. The recommended dosing is two inhalations of either strength (100mcg/5mcg, 200mcg/5mcg) twice daily. Each inhaler provides a month's supply (i.e., 120 inhalations). DULERA contains the same Black Box Warning (i.e., long-acting beta agonists) as the other two agents. (2)
- **PROVENGE (sipulecel-T) Prostate cancer:** This novel new approach to cancer treatment is indicated for the treatment of asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic metastatic castrate resistant (hormone refractory) prostate cancer. Patients are scheduled to receive three injections over a one-month period. Data from a pivotal clinical trial showed that study patients lived an average of 4.1 months longer (25.8 vs. 21.7 months) than those treated with placebo. The total cost of therapy is estimated at $93,000! (3)

Market Withdrawals:

- **MYLOTARG:** On June 21, 2010, Pfizer announced the voluntary withdrawal from the U.S market of the drug MYLOTARG (gemtuzumab ozogamicin) which was indicated for the treatment of acute myeloid

leukemia (AML). The company took the action at the request of the FDA after results from a recent clinical trial raised new concerns about the product's safety as well as the fact that the drug failed to demonstrate clinical benefit over the placebo alternative. The drug was originally approved in May 2000 under the FDA's accelerated approval program; but the company was required to conduct additional studies to confirm the drug's clinical safety and efficacy. (4)

FDA News Releases:

- **Proton Pump Inhibitors – New Labeling Changes:** On May 25, 2010, the FDA notified health care professionals of revisions to both prescription and OTC labels for PPIs to include safety information about a possible increased risk of fractures of the hip, wrist, and spine. The new safety information is based on FDA's review of several epidemiological studies that found that those of greatest risk for these fractures received high doses of PPIs for one year or more and were 50 years of age or older. The FDA recommended that health care providers prescribing PPIs consider whether a lower dose or a shorter duration of therapy would adequately treat their patient's condition. (5)
- **QUALAQUIN for leg cramps:** On July 8, 2010, the FDA warned that the unapproved use of the malaria drug QUALAQUIN (quinine sulfate) to treat night time leg cramps had resulted in serious side effects. Between April 2005 and September 2008 a total of 38 side effects were sent to the FDA through its AERS system, 24 of which were serious or life threatening (e.g., thrombotic thrombocytopenia purpura, permanent kidney impairment, etc.). As a result, the manufacturer will be developing a risk management plan aimed at educating health care providers and patients. (6)
- **ARAVA – Risk of severe liver injury:** On July 13, 2010, the FDA released a notice to health care professionals stating that is was adding information on severe liver injury to the Boxed Warning of ARAVA (leflunomide). The decision to add information on severe liver injury to the Boxed Warning was based on the FDA's review of adverse event reports which reported 49 cases of severe liver injury, including 14 cases of fatal liver failure, between April 2002 and May 2009. The highest risk appears to be with those patients taking concomitant therapies known to cause liver injury and patients with pre-existing liver disease. (7)
- **FDA Safety Warnings – Supplements:** It is reported that more than half the American population has taken supplements to stay healthy, lose weight, gain an edge in sports or in the bedroom, and avoid using prescription medications. In 2009 alone, $26.7 billion was spent on supplements in the United States. What consumers and some medical professionals might not realize is that supplement manufacturers routinely and legally sell their products without first having to demonstrate that they are both safe and effective. In 2008 and 2009, the FDA received 1,359 reports of serious adverse effects from supplement manufacturers and 602 and from consumers and health professionals. The FDA routinely reports on recalls of supplements for a variety of safety reasons. Two examples of recent FDA recalls of supplement products due to "undeclared" medications include: a) REVIVEXXX Extra Strength; and b) SOLOSLIM and SOLO SLIM Extra Strength. In the case of REVIVEXXX ES the product was found to contain tadafil, which is the generic name for the BRAND name product CIALIS, and was therefore considered to be an unapproved drug. In a similar fashion SOLO SLIM was found to contain sibutramine which is the generic name for the weight loss prescription product MERIDIA. (8)

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:

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