

Therapeutic Trends

COX-2 Inhibitors and Other Anti-Inflammatories

Insight and Outlook from IMS HEALTH

Two years after the manufacturer of Vioxx announced it would be withdrawing the popular COX-2 inhibitor from the market, arthritis sufferers have once again made the older, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) the most commonly prescribed arthritic medications in Canada (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

COX-2 inhibitors, which are often called the newer NSAIDs, were popular when first introduced in 1999 because they provided arthritis patients pain relief without some of the side-effects associated with older NSAIDs, such as GI problems. Ironically, on September 30, 2004, the last day of Arthritis Month in Canada, Vioxx was withdrawn from the market with its manufacturer citing an increased risk of cardiovascular events for long-term users. A few months later, on December 17, 2004, another popular COX-2 inhibitor, Celebrex, was the subject of a drug advisory warning issued by its

manufacturer. This warning also cited increased risk of heart problems. Bextra, another COX-2 inhibitor, was taken off the market in April 2005.

In 2003, the year before Vioxx was withdrawn from the market, there were 7.7 million prescriptions dispensed for all COX-2 inhibitors. This year, for the 12 months prior to the end of June 2006, that number has fallen to 3.4 million prescriptions. While COX-2 inhibitor prescriptions have fallen by about 55% over this period, prescriptions for older NSAIDs went up by approximately 30%. In 2003, there were 5.9 million NSAID prescriptions dispensed. For the 12 months prior to the end of June 2006, there were 7.7 million NSAID prescriptions dispensed.

The entire anti-arthritic market has decreased by about 20% over this same period, indicating that some arthritis sufferers have moved away from both the newer and older NSAIDs.

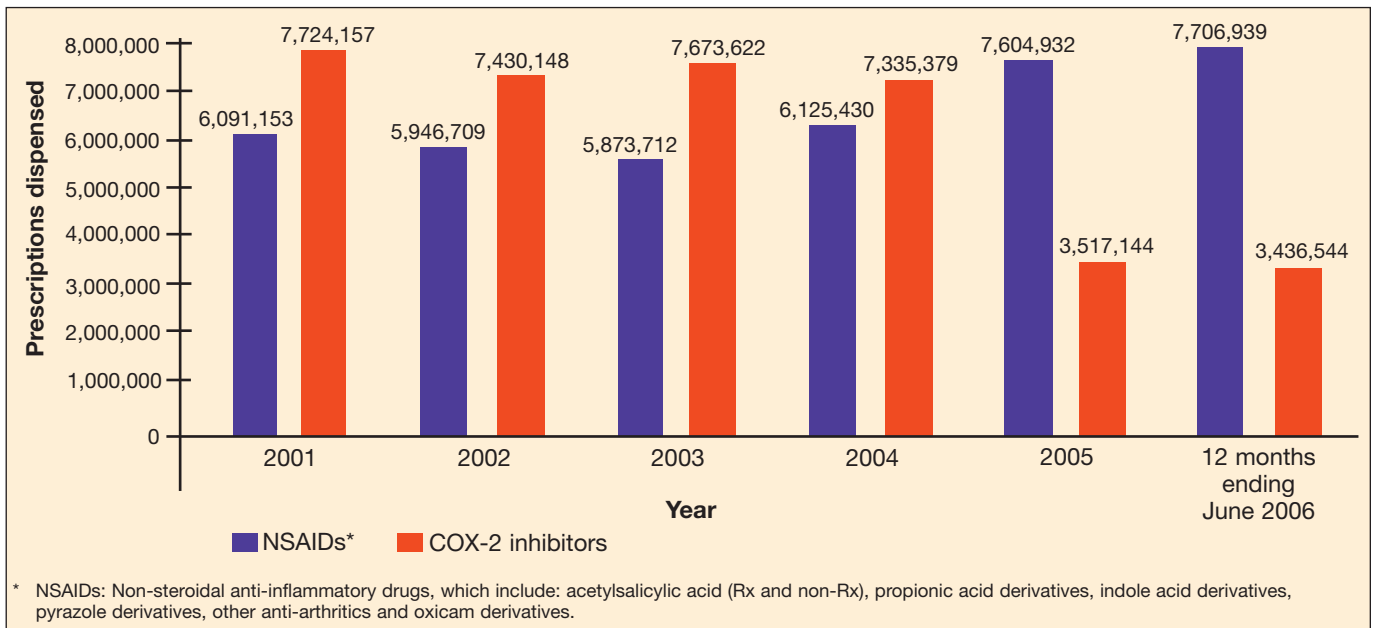
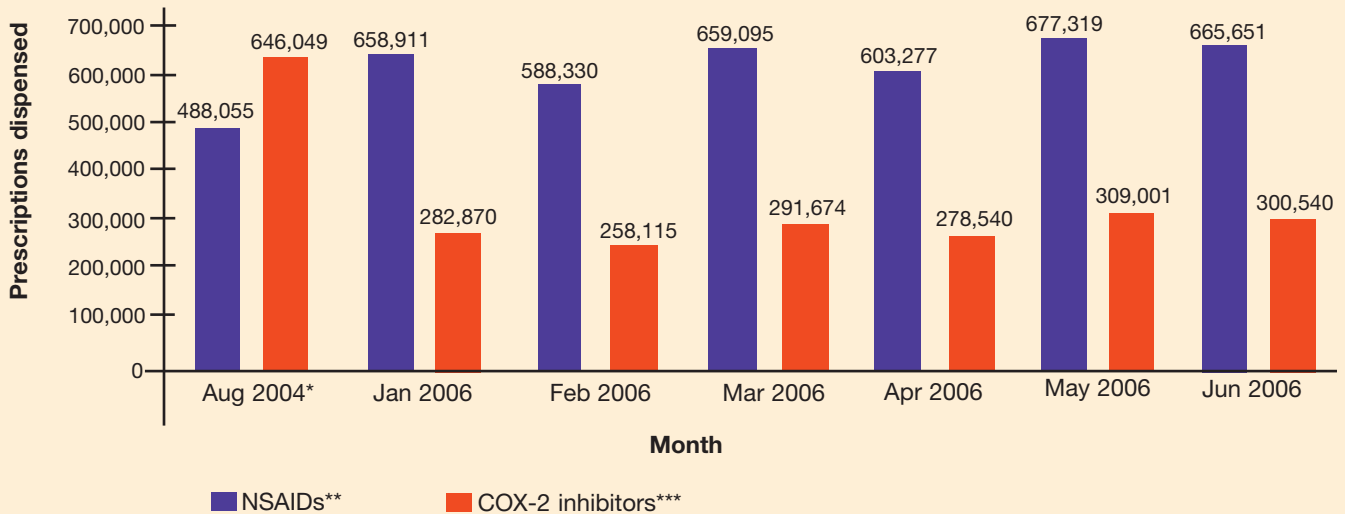


Figure 1. Estimated prescriptions dispensed in Canadian retail pharmacies per year since 2001.



* Month prior to Vioxx withdrawal from market.

** NSAIDs include: acetylsalicylic acid (Rx and non-Rx), propionic acid derivatives, indole acid derivatives, pyrazole derivatives, other anti-arthritis and oxicam derivatives.

*** In 2006, two COX-2 inhibitors remained on the market: Celebrex and Mobicox (and generics).

Figure 2. Estimated prescriptions dispensed in Canadian retail pharmacies per month in 2006, as compared to August 2004.

CPM

THERAPEUTIC TRENDS is made available by IMS Health Canada, providing vital information solutions to the Canadian health-care community since 1970. IMS Health Canada is a subsidiary of IMS Health Inc., the world's leading provider of market intelligence to the pharmaceutical and health-care industries in over 100 countries. IMS offers leading-edge business intelligence products and services that are integral to clients' day-to-day operations, including portfolio optimization capabilities; launch and brand management solutions; sales force effectiveness innovations; and consulting and services solutions that improve the delivery of quality health care worldwide. For more information, please contact an IMS representative.

Montreal, QC (514) 428-6000

Mississauga, ON (905) 816-5000

Source: IMS Health, Canada, CompuScript. Copyright© 2006 IMS HEALTH Canada. All Rights Reserved.



**Looking for a Supplier? Need a Specialized Service?
Interested in Industry News & Information?**

Find it all online at:

Pharma411.ca

**The Premiere Online Directory & Resource Site
for the Canadian Pharmaceutical Industry**

Medzyme