

Medical Briefs

This Month:

1. Cialis™ approved for ED
2. Flexible dosing asthma treatment
3. Ontario Drug Benefit now includes Plavix®
4. Oral contraceptives

1. A New Option for ED

Health Canada has approved Cialis™ (tadalafil) for the treatment of erectile dysfunction (ED). Cialis has been studied extensively in clinical trials involving more than 7,000 men from around the world. Results of these studies showed that 81% of men taking Cialis, 20 mg, reported improved erections. The drug has also been shown to be effective for up to 36 hours after taking it. Cialis is scheduled to become available in Canadian pharmacies in the coming months.

How does it apply to your practice? “With Cialis, many couples will now have a new option to help restore spontaneity in their relationships, allowing them to be intimate when the moment is right,” said Dr. Loren Grossman, Vice-President of Research and Development, Eli Lilly Canada Inc. Cialis is a new prescription alternative that will work longer than other ED drugs on the market.

Cialis™ Approved for the Treatment of Erectile Dysfunction in Canada. Press Release, Montreal, Quebec, September 18, 2003.

2. More Flexible Asthma Treatment

Results of an all-Canadian clinical trial involving 995 asthma patients show that flexible dosing with Symbicort® (budesonide/formoterol) in a single inhaler provides more effective asthma control than traditional fixed dosing. Patients on flexible dosing with Symbicort experienced 57% fewer exacerbations and required 36% fewer overall doses.

How does it apply to your practice? Guidelines for asthma care in Canada have stressed the importance of adapting treatment to the individual needs of patients. Dr. Mark FitzGerald, professor of medicine, University of British Columbia, said, “An adjustable treatment strategy offers patients flexibility to change their medication according to their level of symptoms in order to achieve ongoing control of their asthma.”

Canadian Study Shows Flexible Dosing Provides Better Asthma Control Than Traditional Fixed Dosing. Press Release, Vancouver, British Columbia, September 9, 2003.

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3. New Benefits in Ontario

In August, the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program announced a formulary update. Effective Sept. 4, 2003, the ODB has listed Plavix[®] (clopidogrel bisulfate) as a limited use (LU) benefit for patients immediately post-hospitalization with acute coronary syndrome or percutaneous coronary intervention (with or without stent). The approval period is 12 months.

How does it apply to your practice? As a result of this new LU listing, health-care professionals and patients will experience a number of benefits. The LU reimbursement process provides physicians and patients with timely access to Plavix immediately upon hospital discharge with no delay. Thus, patients at risk of another atherothrombotic event will now have superior long-term protection with Plavix.

Important News on Ontario Drug Benefit Changes to Plavix. Press Release, September 4, 2003.

4. Oral Contraceptives: Are They Risky?

Over the past year, there have been many reports associating oral contraceptive use with venous thromboembolism (VTE). In fact, all oral contraceptives raise the risk of blood clots very slightly, and the death rate from VTE is extremely low. Also, it is important to note that the risk of VTE is not equal among all estrogen/progestin combinations. In 2002, Dr. Ojvind Lidegaard published research on hormonal combination use and VTE, assessing risk estimates of VTE among women taking Diane[®]-35 (cyproterone acetate plus ethinylestradiol).

How does it apply to your practice? Dr. Lidegaard's research showed that the risk of blood clots associated with Diane-35 was not greater than with other oral contraceptives; in fact, it was lower. Since its Canadian launch in 1998, there have been over 2.1 million prescriptions of Diane-35 issued, and its safety profile has been shown to be similar to standard oral contraceptives.

Are Canadian Women Using Oral Contraceptives or Other Hormonal Therapies at Risk? Press Release, Montreal, Quebec, August 20, 2003.



Indicated for the maintenance treatment of asthma in patients where the use of a combination product is appropriate. See Product Monograph for patient selection, warnings, precautions and adverse events.

 GlaxoSmithKline


salmeterol xinafoate / fluticasone propionate