

### Remeron® RDTM: A unique way to treat depression

Health Canada has recently approved Remeron® RDTM (mirtazapine), a unique disintegrating tablet used to treat depression. A study showed that Remeron RDTM acts faster to relieve depression-related symptoms compared to selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. The tablet increases serotonin and norepinephrine levels in the nerve cells of the brain, which effectively fights depression. This is in contrast to other medications, which increase serotonin and can cause nausea, sexual dysfunction, insomnia, and anxiety. Remeron RDTM's unique delivery system means better adherence to the medication.

**How does it apply to your practice?** Depression, a common and serious mental disorder, affects more than 3 million Canadians. "Without effective treatment, depression can undermine a person's ability to cope with everyday interactions with their family, friends, and colleagues," said Dr. Brian Bexton, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst at Sacré Coeur Hospital's Clinic for Affective Disorders, in Montreal. He said Remeron RDTM demonstrated efficacy in relieving anxiety and sleep disorders which occur in 60% to 90% of depressed patients. The tablet also showed an excellent tolerability profile and 85% of patients claimed it was more convenient.

First and Only Rapid Disintegrating Antidepressant Tablet Indicated for the Treatment of Depression Receives Approval. Press Release. Montreal, Quebec, June 1, 2004.

### Are hormonal acne medications a safe option?

A review of six studies published in the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada* showed the risk of developing venous thromboembolism (VTE) among Diane®-35 users was no greater than those using oral contraceptives (OC) in females aged 14 to 49. It was suggested hormonal therapies used to treat acne could cause VTE. Dr. Dayna Freedman, an obstetrician-gynecologist at Centennial Health Centre in Scarborough, Ontario, adds that the risk of VTE with acne medications with OC properties is six times lower than the risk of developing blood clots due to pregnancy.

**How does it apply to your practice?** About eight out of 10 Canadians experience acne. Most outgrow it in their mid-20s, but 11% carry it through adulthood. "Not only is Diane-35 a safe option," said Dr. Rod Kunyetz, a dermatologist and assistant professor of dermatology at the University of Toronto, "but it is unique in that it has been specifically designed to treat acne. Diane-35 has continuously shown to provide rapid and effective improvement or healing of acne in women."

Acne Treatments: Are Women Putting Themselves at Risk in the Pursuit of Beauty? Press Release. Toronto, Ontario, May 19, 2004.

### Spiriva® means good news for COPD patients

According to studies presented at the 100th international conference of the American Thoracic Society, Spiriva® (tiotropium) significantly reduces exacerbations, health-care utilization, and air trapping, and improves exercise endurance in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Spiriva is an inhaled anticholinergic medication recommended for the first-line maintenance treatment of COPD with once-daily dosing.

#### Air trapping study

In a six-week, placebo-controlled study, Spiriva significantly reduced air trapping for 24 hours. The results showed reductions in residual lung volume, functional residual lung capacity, and improved inspiratory lung capacity. Spiriva was also shown to help COPD patients stay active longer.

#### Exacerbations study

The study involved 1,829 patients taking placebo or Spiriva as well as usual care. Exacerbations in this study were considered as: coughs; sputum; wheezing; dyspnea or chest tightness lasting three days or more, requiring treatment with antibiotics, steroids, or hospitalization. The results showed that Spiriva reduced the number of exacerbations per patient-year, as well as the number of exacerbation days per patient-year. It delayed time to first exacerbation and associated hospitalization, as well as reduced treatment days. Furthermore, hospital visits were reduced per patient-years and the number of unscheduled visits was also reduced.

**How does it apply to your practice?** Air trapping and exacerbations are key targets for COPD therapy as they have a negative impact on a patient's quality of life, explained professor Denis O'Donnell, head of the division of respiratory and critical care medicine at Queen's University.

International guidelines state improving exercise capacity is a leading goal in COPD management and can help improve the patient's quality of life. Dr. Dennis Neiwoehner, principal investigator of the exacerbation study, said, "These study results indicate that Spiriva can play an important role in reducing the enormous human and economic costs that result from COPD exacerbations."

"These study results underscore the significant benefits of Spiriva in reducing air trapping, and confirm that it is an important treatment option for patients with COPD," added O'Donnell.

**D<sub>x</sub>**

1. New Data Show Spiriva® Significantly Reduced Air Trapping in the Lungs and Improved Exercise Endurance in Patients with COPD. Press Release. Ingelheim, Germany, May 26, 2004.

2. New Data Show Spiriva® Significantly Reduced Exacerbations and Related Health Care Utilization in Patients with COPD. Press Release. Ingelheim, Germany, May 24, 2004.