PRODUCT UPDATE

Sandra A. Mitchell, ARNP, MScN, AOCN®
Associate Editor

PHARMACY CORNER

New Cytokine Approved for Anemia of Chronic Renal Failure

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved Aranesp™ for injection (darbepoietin alfa, Amgen, Thousand Oaks, CA) for the treatment of patients with anemia associated with chronic renal failure regardless of whether the patient is on dialysis. Because of its longer serum half-life, Aranesp requires fewer injections than the existing treatment, epoietin alfa, thus simplifying anemia management for patients and healthcare providers. Aranesp stimulates bone marrow to increase red blood cell production and has been shown to result in a clinically significant improvement of anemia in patients with chronic renal failure.

The recommended starting dose is 0.45 micrograms/kg given intravenously or subcutaneously once a week. Some patients have been treated successfully with subcutaneous Aranesp once every two weeks. When converting from epoietin alfa, Aranesp should be given once a week if a patient was receiving epoietin alfa two to three times weekly; it should be given once every two weeks if a patient was receiving epoietin alfa once a week.

The approval was based on data from 1,598 patients with chronic renal failure treated in 12 clinical trials. Patients receiving Aranesp consistently reached target hemoglobin levels, and the drug generally was well tolerated. The most commonly reported side effects were infection, hypertension, hypotension, myalgia, headache, and diarrhea. Amgen has filed a supplemental biologics license application for Aranesp for the treatment of patients with cancer with chemotherapy-related anemia.

For more information, contact Amgen at 800-772-6436 or visit the Aranesp Web site at www.aranesp.com.

Description of products does not indicate or imply endorsement by the Oncology Nursing Forum *or the Oncology Nursing Society.*

Generic Pamidronate Disodium Receives Marketing Approvals

Bedford Laboratories, a division of Ben Venue Laboratories (Bedford, OH), has received approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to market pamidronate disodium for injection. The product is equivalent to Aredia® (Novartis Pharmaceuticals, East Hanover, NJ), a bone-resorption inhibitor indicated for the treatment of hypercalcemia associated with malignancy, Paget's Disease, osteolytic bone metastases of breast cancer, and osteolytic lesions of multiple myeloma. Patients receiving pamidronate disodium for injection may experience fatigue, fever, nausea, vomiting, anemia, skeletal pain and transient arthralgias, and myalgias. Serum calcium and electrolytes must be monitored closely. Pamidronate disodium for injection is available in 30 mg and 90 mg vials.

For more information, contact Bedford Laboratories at 800-521-5169 or visit its Web site at www.bedfordlabs.com.

Acid Reflux Treatment Approved

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the new proton pump inhibitor Nexium™ (esomeprazole magnesium, AstraZeneca, Wilmington, DE) for the treatment of heartburn and other symptoms associated with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and the healing of erosive esophagitis. The new drug also was approved for maintenance of erosive esophagitis healing and, in combination with amoxicillin and clarithromycin, for eradication of *Helicobacter pylori* infection in patients with duodenal ulcer disease.

More than 25 million adults experience heartburn on a daily basis. Although heartburn is the most common symptom of GERD, the condition often is marked by other symptoms, such as a sour taste in the mouth or difficulty swallowing related to the backing up of harsh stomach acid into the esophagus. When this acid reflux damages the lining of the esophagus, it may lead to a potentially more serious condition, erosive esophagitis, which can lead to narrowing or ulceration of the esophagus.

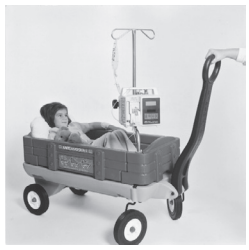
Nexium suppresses gastric acid production and secretion by the gastric parietal cells. Four multicenter, double-blind, randomized trials evaluated the healing rates of Nexium 40 mg, Nexium 20 mg, and omeprazole 20 mg in subjects with endoscopically diagnosed erosive esophagitis. Healing rates were evaluated at weeks four and eight. At week eight, healing rates were higher with Nexium treatment compared to omeprazole in all four studies. Nexium has a safety profile similar to that of omeprazole and generally is well tolerated. Headache and diarrhea were the most common adverse effects. Nexium is available in a delayed-release capsule formulation with dosages of 20 mg or 40 mg.

For more information, contact AstraZeneca at 800-456-3669 or visit its Web site at www.astrazeneca.com.

NEW PRODUCTS

Nurse-Designed Pediatric Wagon Eliminates Potential IV Risks

Pediatric nurse Angie Potter, RN, of St. Louis, MO, has made it easier for children who require IV therapies to stay mobile. Potter, founder and president of MedWagon, Inc. (St. Louis, MO), has invented a wagon that incorporates an integrated IV pole. The MedWagon allows children who require IV or nutritional support to achieve a new sense of freedom. The MedWagon's design eliminates the difficult and potentially dangerous task of simultaneously pulling a wagon and an IV pole together. The MedWagon is a plastic wagon that has a stainless steel pole integrated into its design. The sides are removable for patient access, and the rubber tires provide a quiet ride. The cost is about $425.



Digital Object Identifier: 10.1188/02.ONF.593-594