PALLIATIVE MEDS INFO NEWSLETTER

Volume (1) Issue (4) November 2012.

This month we are launching our medicines information leaflets for patients. The OLH&CS Opioid Conversion Chart is now available. Enjoy!

Palliative Meds Info
Palliative Care Medicines Information Service

Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services
Harold's Cross & Blackrock

tel: 01 4912578
palliativemedsinfo@olh.ie

Patient Information Leaflets for Medicines used in Palliative Care are now available from the Palliative Meds Info Webpages.

We are delighted to announce the launch of the Palliative Meds Info Patient Information Leaflets. The leaflets are now available from our webpages and provide relevant information, in a patient friendly format, on a selection of medicines used in palliative care. We hope to add more patient information leaflets in the coming months. These leaflets aim to support patients and health care professionals advising patients on the use of medicines in palliative care.

The first EU Health Literacy Survey found that in Ireland, 39% of people have inadequate or problematic health literacy. Vulnerable groups such as those experiencing long term illness, financial hardship and those from lower-socio-economic groups were seen to have the lowest levels of health literacy. Low levels of health literacy results in poorer health, poor quality of self-care and self-management of disease, ineffective use of the health service and a decreased ability to advocate for oneself in the healthcare arena. The results showed that over 17% of people have difficulty understanding leaflets that accompany medicines. Studies have also shown that medicines information leaflets are an effective educational tool. Patients can often forget most of what there are told during a consultation and therefore educational messages are best given by a variety of methods. Written information complements verbal messages and may enhance concordance with prescribed medicines. Patients vary in the quantity of information they wish to receive and it is a duty of the professional to deliver it at an appropriate level for each patient.

Some medicines used in Palliative Care are prescribed for unlicensed indications and relevant information is not readily available to the patient in the package leaflet. The aim of these leaflets is to support patients and/or family members by providing clear, concise and accurate information that will allow them too effectively and safely administer the medication and to identify and respond appropriately to side-effects. The leaflets are designed to complement verbal information. The leaflets are **NOT** intended to replace verbal counselling. In order to ensure that the leafets are used appropriately the following is recommended;

- The prescribing doctor should be informed that the leaflet is going to be given to the patient.
- The leaflet should be provided to the patient by a doctor, nurse or pharmacist.
- The healthcare professional should discuss the leaflet with the patient, filling in the sections regarding, the patient's name, the healthcare professional's name, the indication and the administration instructions. Any additional information that the healthcare professional deems appropriate should be filled in on the back page.
- The patient should be given time to consider the information provided and the opportunity to ask further questions at a later stage.

Dexamethasone tablets,
Glycopyrronium tablets,
Haloperidol capsules/tablets,
Ritalin (Methylphenidate) tablets
Epistatus® (Midazolam) Liquid

What is the difference between the buccal midazolam preparations Epistatus® and Buccolam®?

A new buccal midazolam preparation Buccolam® has recently become available on the Irish market. What are the differences between the traditional product Epistatus® and Buccolam®? Epistatus® is an unlicensed preparation in Ireland and can be costly for patients in the community. The two products contain different midazolam salts. Epistatus® 10mg/ml buccal liquid contains midazolam maleate.[1] Buccolam® oromucosal solution contains midazolam hydrochloride.[2]

Buccolam® is presented in four age-specific, colour-coded, pre-filled oral syringes, specially prepared for oromucosal (buccal) administration;

- 2.5mg/0.5mls (yellow),
- 5mg/1ml (blue),
- 7.5mg/1.5mls (purple)
- 10mg/2mls (orange)[2].

Buccolam® is licensed in Ireland for the treatment of seizures in paediatric patients who have been diagnosed with epilepsy.[3,4,5,6] Buccolam® is available on the medical card (GMS) and Drug Payment Schemes (DPS) through community pharmacies.

It is debatable whether the pharmacokinetic variations between the two salts (hydrochloride or maleate) are clinically significant. There are no known published head-to-head studies comparing the safety and efficacy of midazolam hydrochloride with midazolam maleate administered via the oromucosal (buccal) route. Therefore, the products should not be considered bioequivalent but it is unlikely that the choice of product should impact on the dose of midazolam prescribed. For patient with palliative needs receiving a dose of midazolam on a regular basis, it may be prudent to avoid switching between the products.

There have been medication safety issues raised with the use of buccal midazolam. Firstly, as Buccolam® comes in several different strengths, it is important to ensure that the correct preparation is prescribed.[8] Other administration errors that have occurred with buccal midazolam include, an incident where 2.5mls (25mg) was administered instead of 2.5mg (0.5ml). The dose should always prescribed in **mg and mL**.[11] There is a potential for an administration error if buccal midazolam is administered through an IV administration device with a 'luer' connector.[11]

The most common adverse reactions in clinical trials of buccal midazolam were sedation, somnolence, depressed levels of consciousness, respiratory depression, and nausea and vomiting.[8]

Once a Buccolam® oromucosal syringe has been opened it should be discarded, as directed, immediately after use. Any remaining solution should not be stored for use at a later stage. [12]
The full enquiry is available from our webpages What is the difference between the buccal midazolam preparations Epistatus® and Buccolam.

Our Lady's Hospice and Care Services Opioid Conversion Chart

We recently developed an Opioid Conversion Chart for use in OLH&CS. The chart is available from our webpages:**Opioid Conversion Chart**. Of note, we are now using a morphine to oxycodone conversion ratio of 1:1.5. This conversion ratio is based on recommendations in the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) guidelines on the use of opioid analgesics in the treatment of cancer pain.