Drug Information Bulletin

Drug Information Centre (DIC)
Indian Pharmaceutical Association
Bengal Branch
Tele fax: 033 24612776, E-mail: ipabengal.dic@gmail.com
Web Site: http://www.ipabengal.org
Contact: 09830136291

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Content

- Editorial
- Manufacturers directed to include warning “Not to be used” in cough syrup of Chlorpheniramine Maleate IP 2 mg + Phenylephrine Hcl 6 mg drop/ml”
- JN.1 Covid variant is more transmissible & more infectious: Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Former DG, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
- Diazoxide Potential risk of necrotizing enterocolitis
- Sulfamethoxazole, trimethoprime Risk of Haemophagocytic lumphohistiocytosis (HLH)
- Zinc acetate Risk of gastric ulcer
- Cataract Surgery Linked to Improved Cognitive Function in Elderly Patients Study Finds
- Continuation from the last issue.........

Editorial

New Year Greetings from Drug Information Bulletin!

Notification by the Ministry of Health, Govt. of India prohibiting 14 Fixed Dose Combination (FDC) vide several S.Os dated 2nd June 2023 is a welcome step considering the wellbeing of the health of the people. A few years back DCGI published a list of FDCs as irrational, but those were available in the market as a result of some litigation. Again DCGI has given a direction to submit Safety and Efficacy data of the FDCs available in the market without approval from the DCGI with a deadline on 30th August 2013. After 2013 there were several exercise by the DCGI and ultimately they have banned about 344 irrational combinations vide S.O. 705 (E) to 1048(E) dated 10.03.2016 and S.O. No. 1851 (E) to 1855 (E) dtd. 08.06.2017. This is a unique occasion that a huge number of drugs have been banned by the Indian regulators. Sources revealed that these moves made some of the pharmaceutical manufacturers in an uncomfortable position and they went to the court of law. The Hon’ble Supreme Court of India in its judgment stated that Central Government may carry out an inquiry and central Govt. has constituted a committee, who has submitted their report to the Govt. and DTAB subsequently. On the basis of the recommendations of the Expert Committee and the Drugs Technical Advisory Board, the Central Government is satisfied that it is necessary in public interest to regulate by way of prohibition for human use of the said drug in the country and prohibited 14 FDCs vide several S.Os dated 2nd June 2023.

Recently one notification issued by DCGI for further restriction for use in children is also a good step for safety of public health.

Dr. Subhash C. Mandal
Editor
E mail: subhash.mandaldr@gmail.com
Mob.. 9830136291
Manufacturers directed to include warning “Not to be used” in Cough syrup of Chlorpheniramine Maleate IP 2 mg + Phenylephrine Hcl 6 mg drop/ml”

JN.1 Covid variant is more transmissible & more infectious: Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Former DG, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

India has recorded a total of 4,097 active Covid-19 cases, according to Union Health Ministry data. As per official data, six deaths have been reported in the country in the last 24 hours - two in Maharashtra, and one each in Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, and West Bengal.

Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Former DG, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has warned that the JN.1 Covid-19 variant is more transmissible, and infectious, as compared to other variants. The health expert cited “certain mutations” for the JN.1 Covid-19 variant's transmissibility. She said that the JN.1 Covid-19 variant belongs to the Omicron family, the same variant that drove the third Covid wave in India. However, Swaminathan also assured, “the public health risk is still low in the sense that because we all have immunity now because of the vaccines and the natural infections, we've had in the past, and that immunity still seems to be quite strong”.

"It (the vaccine-induced immunity against Covid-19) is still protecting most of us from getting severely ill. What we are seeing now is a surge of infections and because the testing has been stepped up in the recent few days, as well as the
genomics surveillance, the more we test, the more we are going to detect, and also we’re going to find more JN 1. variant in the country..."

Ahead of the New Year, both centre and state governments are keeping a vigilant eye on the new Covid variant JN.1. As many as 145 Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been detected in the country as of 28 December.

All the states' health ministers are assessing the preparedness of the hospitals. The Maharashtra government on Thursday asked people and institutions in the state to remain alert for the next 10 to 15 days. Kerala reported 78 new cases, followed by Gujarat at 34.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has classified JN.1 as a separate "variant of interest" given its rapidly increasing spread but said it poses a "low" global public health risk.

As per media reports, some symptoms of Covid variant JN.1 might include extreme fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, loss of taste or smell.

Ref. Livemint

**Diazoxide Potential risk of necrotizing enterocolitis**

Health Canada has announced that the product information for diazoxide (Proglycem®) is to be updated to include the potential risk of necrotizing enterocolitis (inflammation and death of tissue in the small or large intestine) of a newborn or infant. Diazoxide is indicated for the management of hypoglycaemia in infants, children and adults caused by hyperinsulinism, when other medical therapy or surgical management has been unsuccessful or is not feasible. Triggered by cases published in the scientific literature, Health Canada reviewed information from the Canada Vigilance database. Health Canada reviewed 21 cases (one domestic and 20 international), of which 15 (all international) met the criteria for further assessment. All 15 cases assessed were reported in infants two months of age or younger, with 13 of the 15 cases occurring within the first 28 days of life. Of the 15 cases, two were found to be probably linked to the use of diazoxide, 11 were found to be possibly linked (three deaths included), one was unlikely to be linked and one could not be assessed. The review found a possible link between the use of diazoxide and the risk of necrotizing enterocolitis in newborns and infants.

Reference: Health Product InfoWatch, Health Canada, June 2023 (link to the source within www.hcsc.gc.ca)

**Sulfamethoxazole, trimethoprim Risk of haemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis (HLH)**

Health Canada has announced that the product safety information for combination sulfamethoxazole and trimethoprim-containing products will be updated to include the risk of haemophagocyticlymphohistiocytosis (HLH). HLH is a condition where large numbers of white blood cells build up in, and damage organs and destroy other blood cells. Combination sulfamethoxazole and trimethoprim is a prescription antibiotic medicine indicated for the treatment of various bacterial infections, such as urinary tract infections, respiratory tract infections, and gastrointestinal infections.

Triggered by a labelling update for these products by the EMA, Health Canada reviewed the available information from the Canadian and international databases. Of the ten cases assessed, one case was found to be probably linked to the use of the medicine, eight were found to be possibly linked (including one fatal case) and one (another fatal case) was unlikely to be linked. The review found a possible link between the use of the medicine and the risk of HLH.

Reference: Health Product InfoWatch, Health Canada, June 2023

**Zinc acetate Risk of gastric ulcer**

The MHLW and the PMDA have announced that the product information for zinc acetate will be updated to include the risk of gastric ulcer. Zinc acetate is indicated for the treatment of Wilson's disease and hypozincaeemia. The MHLW and the PMDA assessed a total of 13 reported cases involving zinc acetate and peptic ulcer, and in the seven cases a causal relationship between the medicine and event was reasonably possible. Based on the sites of ulceration in the reports, gastric ulcer, rather than peptic ulcer, was
Cataract Surgery Linked to Improved Cognitive Function in Elderly Patients Study Finds

In a recent study published in Acta Ophthalmologica, researchers highlighted the positive impact of cataract surgery on cognitive function, especially in individuals with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and dementia. The research, conducted as a prospective observational study between 2019 and 2021, focused on individuals aged 75 and older.

The study, spanning two years, aimed to investigate the correlation between cataract surgery and cognitive function, specifically in patients with MCI and dementia. Researchers used the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) and MMSE for the visually impaired (MMSE-blind) to assess cognitive changes before and three months after cataract surgery. Among the 132 patients initially screened, 88 met the study's inclusion criteria.

The dementia group comprised 39 patients, while 49 were classified in the MCI group. Remarkably, the MCI group exhibited a substantial improvement in MMSE scores, increasing from pre-surgery (25.65 ± 1.03) to post-surgery (27.08 ± 1.99), and MMSE-blind scores, rising from pre-surgery (18.04 ± 1.14) to post-surgery (19.41 ± 2.01). The findings underscored a notable enhancement in cognitive function following cataract surgery, with a more pronounced effect observed in patients with MCI compared to those with dementia.

Statistical analysis revealed a substantial likelihood of cognitive improvement in the MCI group post-surgery compared to the dementia group. The study suggested a close link between the extent of cognitive improvement post-surgery and the patients preoperative cognitive state.


Continuation from the last issue: New Drug: Relugolix tablets for oral use

Relugolix is the first orally active non-peptide GnRH receptor antagonist. As such, there are no injection site reactions that are often associated with degarelix or GnRH agonists. Importantly, previous randomized trials have indicated that relugolix has comparable or even better effects, compared with degarelix or GnRH agonists, on rapid and sustained androgen suppression, as well as adverse events, in patients with prostate cancer. Relugolix thus represents an oral alternative to injectable ADT. However, it remains to be seen whether previous observations on relugolix can readily translate into clinically relevant outcomes of prostate cancer. Remarkably, none of the studies described in this article have reported long-term oncologic outcomes of patients who received relugolix therapy. Furthermore, while the development of castration-resistant disease following ADT remains a major challenge in patients with advanced prostate cancer, the specific implication of relugolix in castration-resistant prostate cancer cannot thus be discussed. Additional issues include considerable reduction in the absorption of oral relugolix by food intake and potential interactions between relugolix and P-glycoprotein/CYP3A4 inducers such as apalutamide. Accordingly, further accumulation of data on the actual clinical benefits of relugolix therapy for prostate cancer is warranted.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10408655/