PRODUCT UPDATE

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PHARMACY CORNER

Investigational Immunotherapy May Improve Survival

Researchers from Dendreon Corporation presented data demonstrating the correlation of the cumulative potency of Provenge® (sipuleucel-T), an investigational active cellular immunotherapy for hormone-refractory prostate cancer, with overall survival; the first time that an association between higher potency of an active immune therapy and increased patient survival has been reported.

Results showed that patients taking Provenge experienced improved survival if they received more cells across the three doses of Provenge. The study's correlation between patient survival and a measure of the cumulative potency of Provenge has not been demonstrated.

Provenge may be a breakthrough in a new class of active cellular immunotherapies that are uniquely designed to use live human cells to engage the patient's own immune system with the goal of eliciting specific, long-lasting responses to cancer. Patients in clinical studies typically received three doses of Provenge over a one-month period as a complete course of therapy.

Multiple Strengths Unveiled for Pain Medication

Purdue Pharma has released OxyContin® (oxycodone) in 15 mg, 30 mg, and 60 mg tablets, complementing the 10 mg, 20 mg, 40 mg, and 80 mg dose strengths already available. The new tablets were introduced in response to requests from healthcare professionals for greater flexibility in dosing and titration. The new tablets may reduce the need for multiple prescriptions, corresponding patient copayments, and the number of tablets needed to achieve a specific therapeutic dose.

For more information, contact Purdue's Medical Services Department at +1-888-726-7535.

NEW PRODUCTS

Postsurgical Bra Secures Dressings

Dale Medical Products, Inc., has unveiled a postsurgical bra that securely and comfortably holds dressings and eases examinations and treatments for a variety of procedures, such as mastectomy, lumpectomy, biopsy, reduction, and reconstruction.

The Dale Postsurgical Bra® features a stretch knit fabric that helps the surgical site breathe. In addition, a smooth, seamless design stretches to provide proper compression and support and a Velcro™-like front closure helps facilitate dressing changes.

The bra was developed to replace elasticized bandages, T-shirts, and traditional sports bras, and can be worn as a leisure or sleep bra following surgery. In addition, the bra is latex free, eliminating hypersensitivity reactions in patients and caregivers.

For more information, visit www.dalemed.com.

Cleaning System Developed for Ostomy Pouch

Schena Ostomy Technologies, Inc., has developed EZ-Clean for fast and hygienic cleanings of ostomy pouches. EZ-Clean uses a water source to directly flush out pouch contents, meaning patients or caregivers no longer have to touch contents of the pouch.

The system is accessed through an inlet opening on the top of the pouch where the water source is attached. The patient directs the pouch drain into the toilet bowl and presses a water valve trigger that creates water turbulence to wash away waste and clean the stoma area. Gently rubbing the exterior of the pouch in the area surrounding the stoma ensures total cleaning.

For video instructions or more information, visit www.ostomyezclean.com.

Video and Guide Promote Breast Health in Younger Women and Minorities

Project Early Awareness, a collaborative effort by the Prevent Cancer Foundation (formerly the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation) and Howard University Cancer Center have released Breast Health Education for Young Women, a facilitator's guide and educational video designed to promote healthy breast habits for younger women, particularly minorities. The materials are designed for nationwide use in school and community group settings.

Project Early Awareness hopes to provide young women with an increased awareness and knowledge about breast cancer and valuable skills to put into practice. In addition, the young women may present the information to other women in their families, spreading the knowledge and encouraging them to get screened for breast cancer.

The 14-minute educational video includes facts about breast cancer, a demonstration of a breast self-examination, an overview of mammography, treatment options, and survivor stories. The video may be ordered at www.preventcancer.org.

The facilitator's guide can be used by health teachers in a group setting. The guide contains instructions for facilitating interactive activities, including a discussion of the video, a demonstration and practice of breast self-examinations using breast models, a critical thinking exercise, and role play. Information on how the activities may be used to meet national or international educational content standards also is contained in the guide. The guide can be downloaded or may be ordered at www.preventcancer.org.

Wound Dressing Reduces Pain

A large multinational survey has shown that the use of dressings with Safetac® (Molnlycke Health Care U.S.) soft silicone adhesive technology have resulted in reduced pain at dressing changes compared with advanced dressings with traditional adhesives. The Pain on Removal Cases (PORC) survey involved more than 3,000 patients from 20 countries. The survey was conducted to assess patients' pain experiences when using different advanced dressings with traditional adhesives compared with advanced dressings with Safetac soft silicone adhesive technology. The patients initially were treated with a traditional adhesive dressing (polyurethane, acrylic, or a hydrocolloid-based adhesive) and more than 90% indicated that they preferred dressings with Safetac technology.

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The survey revealed a reduction in the levels of pain associated with dressings with the Safetac technology when compared to advanced dressings with traditional adhesives.

Safetac is a patented soft silicone adhesive technology designed for wound dressings. The soft silicone layer is extremely soft and adheres gently to the surrounding skin. Dressings with Safetac technology are easily removed without causing trauma either to the wound or to the surrounding skin. This leads to undisturbed wound healing and minimized pain for the patient.

For more information, visit www.moln-lycke.com.

Count Discrepancies Targeted Through New Sponge System

The SmartSponge™ system by ClearCount Medical Solutions has gained U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval and is now available.

The SmartSponge system saves time and prevents unnecessary x-rays and delays associated with count discrepancies. The sponges are affixed with a passive radiofrequency identifier tag that transmits information to a screen that highlights any count discrepancies. In addition, a quick scan with a SmartWand™ (ClearCount) will identify any sponges remaining in the patient and a mat under the patient lets healthcare providers know whether a scan is proceeding properly. This comprehensive set of features offers efficient, thorough, and easy-to-use solutions for the operating room.

For more information, visit www.clearcount.com.

Catheter Holder Prevents Infections

The Foley Catheter Holder® (Dale Medical Products, Inc.) has been designed to secure a catheter anywhere along the tube or at the "Y" port to minimize movement, prevent urinary tract infections, and enhance patient comfort. The catheter is anchored using a green Velcro-type locking device and features a soft and supple leg band that can be rotated to either leg.

The holder is easy to apply, stretches without narrowing to avoid the tourniquet effect, and eliminates the skin irritation that can result from taping and shaving a patient. The holder does not constrict the blood flow of superficial or deep veins.

For more information, visit www.dalemed.com.

RECALLS AND ALERTS

Warning Issued for Inhaled Diabetic Drug

Pfizer Inc. has informed healthcare professionals and patients of updated safety information in the warnings section of prescribing information for Exubera® (insulin human [rDNA origin]), a short-acting inhaled insulin that helps control high blood sugar in adults with diabetes. Six newly diagnosed cases of primary lung malignancies have been reported in clinical trials involving pateints treated with Exubera and one newly diagnosed case among comparator-treated patients. A postmarketing report of a primary lung malignancy in a patient treated with Exubera also has been reported. However, these reports are not numerous enough to determine whether the lung malignancies are related to Exubera. In addition, all of the patients who were diagnosed with lung malignancies had a prior history of cigarette use.

Because of limited Exubera availability, healthcare professionals should seek alternative treatment options to maintain patients' glycemic control.

For the complete MedWatch Safety Summary, including a link to the manufacturer's healthcare professional and patient letters, visit www.fda.gov/medwatch/safety/2008/safety08.htm#exubera.

Limitations Proposed for Anemia Drugs

An FDA advisory panel has voted to keep anemia drugs from Amgen Inc. and Johnson & Johnson, Inc., on the market but suggested revisions to their safety labels. The committee ruled that the drugs, marketed as Procrit® (epoetin alfa, Johnson & Johnson, Inc.), Epogen® (recombinant epoetin alfa, Amgen Inc.), and Aranesp® (darbepoetin alfa, Amgen Inc.) should not be given to patients with advanced breast cancer or head and neck cancer. The FDA, Johnson & Johnson, Inc., and Amgen Inc. announced that additional warnings would be placed on labels.

The FDA was concerned after study results showed an increased risk of death and tumor growth in chemotherapy patients taking the drugs. Increases in death and tumor growth were seen in patients with various types of cancer, including breast, lymphoid, cervical, head and neck, and non-small cell lung cancer.

NOTEWORTHY

Program Cuts Costs for Patients

The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS) is offering a program that helps patients and their families cope with some of the costs of cancer treatment. LLS provides support for prescription drug copayments and health insurance premiums for patients who meet certain income requirements. Patients with private insurance, Medicare beneficiaries under Medicare Part B or Medicare Plan D, Medicare Supplementary Health Insurance, and Medicare Advantage premium are eligible. The program currently covers patients with Hodgkin lymphoma, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, chronic lymphocytic leukemia, Waldenstrom macroglobulinemia, acute myelogenous leukemia, myeloma, and myelodysplastic syndromes. Other disease categories continue to be added.

For more information, visit www.lls.org/copay or call +1-877-557-2672.