PRODUCT UPDATE

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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.

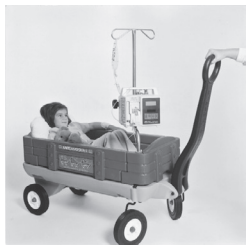
Nexium suppresses gastric acid production and secretion by the gastric parietal cells. Four multicenter, double-blind, randomized trials evaluated the healing rates of Nexium 40 mg, Nexium 20 mg, and omeprazole 20 mg in subjects with endoscopically diagnosed erosive esophagitis. Healing rates were evaluated 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.



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For information on how you can purchase MedWagons or donate them to your favorite hospital, call 314-963-9925 or visit www.medwagon.com.

Low-Residue Meal Kits Satisfy Patients Awaiting Colon Examination

When preparing for a colon examination, patients either can be restricted to a clear liquid diet that may leave them weak, hungry, and irritable, or they can eat the potato chips, chicken noodle soup, and chocolate bars that are a part of the NutraPrep™ meal kit. Cleansing the colon is a vital step in accurately evaluating the bowel and detecting abnormal growths, such as polyps or cancers. Many common foods leave too much residue in the bowel, which can diminish the diagnostic accuracy of the x-ray or endoscopic examination and may result in the need for the procedure to be cancelled. Made by E-Z-EM, Inc. (Westbury, NY), the NutraPrep meal kit contains specially developed foods that are low in residue and provide a full day's worth of nutrition. NutraPrep meal kits also include drinks and shakes. According to product literature, when used in conjunction with a laxative, NutraPrep was more effective than a conventional clear liquid diet in reducing residue in the colon. The study findings, evaluated by two independent endoscopists, revealed significant amounts of retained residue in 50% of the patients on a clear liquid diet but in only 25% of patients using the NutraPrep meal kit. For more information, contact E-Z-EM, Inc. at 800-544-4624 or visit its Web site at www.ezem.com.

New Tests Provide Earlier Detection of HIV and Hepatitis C Virus in Donated Plasma

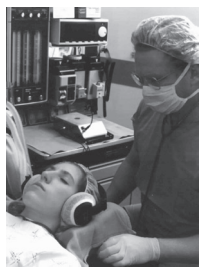
Alpha Therapeutic Corporation (Los Angeles, CA) has received U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for the use of a highly sensitive new testing method for screening plasma donations. The new screening system is expected to further lower the threat of HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV) contamination in the United States blood supply. Utilizing polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology, this testing method is capable of detecting the presence of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1) and HCV in human plasma donations earlier than currently licensed serologic tests. HIV-1 is the dominant AIDS virus variant in the United States.

Alpha Therapeutic Corporation, a leading producer of plasma-derived products, collects plasma donations from its centers across the United States and processes the plasma into a variety of products to treat life-threatening conditions, including IV immune globulin for primary immune deficiencies, coagulation factors for hemophilia, and albumin for shock, burns, and trauma. All plasma donations currently are screened for HIV and hepatitis viruses using serologic tests. These serologic tests detect either antigens (protein components of the virus) or antibodies produced by the body in response to infection. PCR-based tests can detect very small amounts of the viruses' genetic material (ribonucleic acid or RNA). These tests have the potential to detect a virus earlier in the process of infection, during the "window period" of time before an infected person develops detectable levels of viral antigens or antibodies to the virus. Clinical studies conducted by Alpha Therapeutic Corporation demonstrated that this testing method can detect HIV-1 up to 4 days earlier and HCV up to 57 days earlier than traditional tests.

For more information, contact Alpha Therapeutic Corporation at 800-292-6118 or visit its Web site at www.alphather.com.

Music Delivery System Provides Healing Environment for Patients

Healing HealthCare Systems (Reno, NV) has developed the Sondrex System™, a portable music and communication system designed to provide a healing environment for patients undergoing surgery, conscious-sedation, chemotherapy, and other medical procedures. The Sondrex System is the first music delivery system designed for the clinical environment that allows for patient-provider communication during diagnostic or surgical procedures. Through an onboard microphone, healthcare providers are able to communicate with patients without having to remove the headphones, interrupt the music, or otherwise disturb them.



Research from as early as 1949 shows that patients are able to hear while under sedation or anesthesia. Exposure to mechanical sounds and procedural dialogue between healthcare professionals can cause anxiety and increase stress in patients undergoing conscious-sedation procedures, pre- and postoperative anesthesia induction, and recovery. Patient stress levels, in turn, affect the amount of medication needed to achieve adequate sedation, which also may impact the recovery process.

The Sondrex System combines a state-of-the-art personal compact disc player with sound-insulating headphones. For patients who are hearing impaired, the system can be customized so that they can hear effortlessly without their hearing aids. Patients may use the customized CD included with the system or play music of their own choosing. Disposable cotton earmuffs protect the headphones for multiple patient use.

For more information, contact Healing HealthCare Systems at 800-348-0799 or visit its Web site at www.healinghealth.com.

Free Web Site Sends Health Screening Reminder E-mails

The College of American Pathologists (CAP) (Northfield, IL) has designed a new Web site to help patients remember to schedule their regular cancer screening tests. CAP created the service in response to surprising data from a Gallup poll revealing that of 1,000 women, those who received a reminder to schedule a Pap test were more likely to report doing so than women who were not notified—78% versus 47%. The free Web site has been active since July 2001. Visitors simply log on, register, choose the appropriate reminders, and schedule them. The site automatically sends a private e-mail on all the dates requested.

For more information, contact CAP at 800-323-4040 or visit the health screening reminder Web site at www.myhealthtestreminder.com.

Health Reference Publications Updated

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Washington, DC) has released the 2002 editions of three very helpful health reference publications. *Federal Health Information Centers and Clearinghouses* provides Web sites and telephone numbers for federal health information and referral services by topic. *Toll-Free Numbers for Health Information* provides contact phone numbers for both federal and nonprofit organizations by topic. *National Health Observances* is an annual planning guide for health promotion and disease prevention activities. All three guides can be accessed online or downloaded for future reference.

For more information, contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at 877-696-6775 or visit its Web site at www.health.gov. ONS