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Medicines Authority Statement Re: Forthcoming Withdrawal of Thioridazine-containing Medicinal Products

After in-depth discussion of the above-mentioned issue at the Pharmacovigilance Working Party (PhVWP) of the European Medicines Agency (EMEA), the Medicines Authority is disseminating this statement for your information.

During the PhVWP of July 2004, Sweden informed the PhVWP that a renewal of the license for Melleril® (thioridazine) was rejected based on an assessment[1234] carried out on the risk-benefit balance of this medicinal product, concluding that:

- QT-prolongation and sudden death are more common in treatment with thioridazine versus other antipsychotics;
- There is no clear advantage concerning other adverse drug reactions (ADRs) that would outweigh the risk of QT-prolongation;
- The risk-benefit balance of thioridazine is negative.

In response to this decision, the Marketing Authorisation Holder (Novartis) decided to withdraw Melleril® worldwide. The Swedish Medical Products Agency (MPA) took a lead in discussions with Novartis regarding the terms of the withdrawal and the drafting of a Dear Doctor Letter (DDL) that would be circulated in all Member States to inform prescribers regarding the forthcoming withdrawal of Melleril®. Agreement was reached between the MPA and Novartis to withdraw the product worldwide by 30th June 2005, and to circulate a DDL six months before in order to give prescribers ample time in which to switch their patients to an alternative treatment.

A decision was also taken by all members of the PhVWP that since this withdrawal was a result of a negative risk-benefit balance, it would also affect **all** thioridazine-containing medicinal products. Hence, a decision was taken locally to delete thioridazine from the National Formulary.

Once the final text was agreed upon between Novartis and all members of the PhVWP, officials from the Medicines Authority entered into discussions with the local contact people for Novartis in order to circulate the approved DDL to all doctors and pharmacists not later than 10th January 2005.

Prescribers are reminded to switch their patients to another alternative treatment prior to Melleril®'s discontinuation.

[1] Hancox JC et al. Psychotropic drugs, HERG, and the heart. Lancet 2000; 356: 428.
[2] Reilly JG et al. Thioridazine and sudden unexplained death in psychiatric in-patients. Br J Psychiatry 2002; 180: 515-22.
[3] Timell AM. Thioridazine: Re-evaluating the risk/benefit equation. Annals of Clinical Psychiatry 2000; 12: 147-51.
[4] Reilly JG et al. QT_c-interval abnormalities and psychotropic drug therapy in psychiatric patients. Lancet 2000; 355: 1048-52.

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