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## EMA starts review of anxiety medicine Stresam (etifoxine)

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25.06.2021 | Circular Number P09/2021

### Information on Stresam (etifoxine)

- Stresam is authorised in France, Malta, Bulgaria and Romania for the treatment of anxiety disorders.
- The medicine contains the active substance etifoxine. The exact way etifoxine works is not fully understood, but it is known to attach to the same targets (receptors) on nerve cells as GABA (gamma-amino butyric acid). GABA is a neurotransmitter (a chemical that nerve cells use to communicate) that blocks certain brain signals. Etifoxine mimics the effect of GABA both directly and indirectly, leading to a calming effect that helps to control the symptoms associated with anxiety.
- Stresam is available as capsules that are taken daily for a few days up to a number of weeks.
- In 2014, the French medicines agency put in place risk minimisation measures (update to the product information and letter to healthcare professionals) to mitigate the risk of certain side effects identified at that time. The company was also asked to perform additional studies, including the AMETIS study.

The following product is authorised via national procedure.

Active Ingredients	Product Name	Pharmaceutical Form	Classification	Authorisation Number	MAH/license holder
Etifoxine hydrochloride 50 mg	Stresam capsule	Capsule	POM	MA239/00401	Biocodex

### Information from the EMA about the safety concern

EMA has started a review of Stresam (etifoxine), a medicine authorised in some EU countries for the treatment of anxiety disorders.

The review of Stresam has been initiated at the request of France, under [Article 31 of Directive 2001/83/EC](#). The review is being carried out by the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP), responsible for questions concerning medicines for human use, which will adopt the Agency's opinion. The CHMP opinion will then be forwarded to the European Commission, which will issue a final legally binding decision applicable in all EU Member States.

EMA's safety committee (PRAC) has concluded that:

- EMA's review follows the findings of a new study (AMETIS) on the effectiveness of Stresam in treating adjustment disorders (difficulty coping with a stressful event) with anxiety. The results of the study suggest that Stresam had similar effects to placebo (a dummy treatment).
- In addition, an analysis of the available safety data for Stresam, including data from the AMETIS study and that collected through safety monitoring, found that some rare but serious side effects were still occurring, despite measures taken in 2014 to minimise their risk. They include serious skin reactions, liver damage, uterine bleeding between menstrual periods (mainly in women using oral contraceptives), and inflammation of the gut (lymphocytic colitis).
- As a result, the French medicines agency requested a review of the benefits of Stresam in the context of the medicine's risks. EMA will now assess the available data and recommend whether the marketing authorisations for this product should be maintained, varied, suspended or revoked.

### **Reporting Adverse Drug Reactions**

Healthcare professionals and patients are encouraged to maintain vigilance Stresam (etifoxine) medicinal product. Suspected Adverse Drug Reactions (side effects) may be reported using the Medicines Authority Form and sending it to: Sir Temi Żammit Buildings, Malta Life Sciences Park, San Ġwann SĠN 3000 **or** online to <http://www.medicinesauthority.gov.mt/adrportal> or to the marketing authorisation holder or their local representatives.

### **Post-Licensing Directorate**

#### **Medicines Authority**

*Healthcare professionals and patients are encouraged to regularly check the Medicines Authority website for product safety updates as these are issued on an ongoing basis.*

**Feedback Form**

The Medicines Authority thanks you for the time taken to read this safety circular. The dissemination of safety circulars is an important process whereby Regulatory Authorities can communicate important issues with respect to the safety of medicines, in order to protect and enhance public health.

The Medicines Authority kindly invites your anonymous feedback about the regulatory action being communicated. This may be returned by folding this form (address side up), stapling the ends and then posting (no stamp required).

**Feedback:**

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