PRODUCT UPDATE

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Aprepitant Approved for Treatment of Nausea and Vomiting

Emend® (aprepitant, Merck & Co., Inc., Whitehouse Station, NJ) has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to help prevent acute and delayed nausea and vomiting associated with highly emetogenic chemotherapy. Adding Emend to a regimen that includes a 5-HT_3 receptor antagonist and a corticosteriod significantly reduces nausea and vomiting for up to five days after chemotherapy.

Emend, a substance P/neurokinin 1 receptor antagonist, is thought to work by blocking substance P, a neurotransmitter, in the brain. This mechanism of action is different than other antiemetics on the market. Adding Emend to a 5-HT_3 receptor antagonist and a corticosteriod provides more complete protection against and prevention of nausea and vomiting.

The recommended dosing for Emend is one 125 mg capsule one hour before chemotherapy and one 80 mg capsule each day for the first two days after chemotherapy. The catalog price will be approximately $250 for the three-day dosing regimen.

Merck & Co., Inc., has made the Accessing Coverage Today (ACT) for Emend Program available to provide patients with reimbursement information. ACT also will be able to assist patients who cannot afford Emend. The ACT toll-free number is 866-EMENDRX.

Emend may be taken with or without food. The drug has several potential interactions, so patients should have all their medications reviewed before taking this product. Potential drug interactions include interference with anticoagulants and decreased effectiveness of birth control pills. Side effects that have been reported with the Emend regimen include fatigue, nausea, hiccups, constipation, diarrhea, and loss of appetite. For more information, call 800-672-6372 or visit www.emend.com.

New Indication Approved for Imatinib Mesylate

Gleevec™ (imatinib mesylate, Novartis Pharmaceuticals, East Hanover, NJ) was granted accelerated approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for the initial treatment of newly diagnosed Ph+ chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML) in December 2002. This approval was based on 12-month data from a large clinical trial comparing Gleevec to traditional combination chemotherapy. Eighteen-month data were published in the March 13, 2003, issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The longer data analysis confirms that Gleevec provides greater complete responses, slows progression of disease, and offers better tolerance compared to standard treatment. This study did not compare Gleevec to bone marrow transplant. In 1,106 newly diagnosed patients, 74% of those who received Gleevec achieved a complete cytogenic response compared to 8% of patients receiving standard treatment.

Gleevec is approved for use in all three stages of CML—myeloid blast crisis, accelerated and chronic phase—and either before or after other treatments. The most common side effects associated with Gleevec are nausea and vomiting, superficial edema, muscle cramps, skin rash, diarrhea, hemorrhage, fatigue, headache, joint pain, cough, dizziness, dyspepsia, and dyspnea. Neutropenia and thrombocytopenia also can occur. Most side effects were rated as mild to moderate in severity. For more information, call 877-453-3832.

Nanofiltered Product Approved for Sale in the United States

ZLB Bioplasma's (Glendale, CA) Nanofiltered Carimune™ NF Immunoglobulin IV (Human) has been approved for sale in the United States. Nanofiltration is a process that uses a sponge-like filter to remove pathogens much like a water filtration system. Potential pathogens are removed based on size without causing any harm or change to the IgG molecule. Combined with existing pathogen removal techniques, such as partitioning and virus inactivation, nanofiltration greatly reduces many viruses, including HIV, hepatitis C, and bovine enterovirus. Carimune NF is a sterile, highly purified, plasma-derived product used for replacement therapy or immune thrombocytopenic purpura. For more information, visit www.zlbusa.com.

New Proteasome Inhibitor Approved for Use in Patients With Multiple Myeloma

Velcade™ (bortezomib, Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Cambridge, MA) has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use in patients with multiple myeloma who have received at least two prior therapies and demonstrated disease progression on the last therapy. Velcade is a novel drug designed to inhibit proteasomes, which are enzyme complexes. By inhibiting proteasomes, Velcade disrupts the turnover of regulatory proteins in cancer cells and ultimately results in cell death. Velcade currently is in phase I and II trials for metastatic colorectal cancer and advanced non-small cell lung cancer. Velcade also has been granted orphan drug status.

The most frequently reported side effects in phase II studies included nausea, fatigue, diarrhea, constipation, thrombocytopenia, pyrexia, vomiting, anorexia, and peripheral neuropathies. Rarely reported adverse events included infusion reactions, infusion site reactions, alopecia, mucositis, febrile neutropenia, and sepsis. For more information, call 616-679-7000 or visit www.millennium.com.

NEW PRODUCTS

OmniMD Introduces Electronic Direct-to-Pharmacy Prescription Writing

Using the OmniMD Prescription Manager (Integrated Systems Management Inc., Tarrytown, NY), providers can write prescriptions directly from their pocket or desktop computers. Providers can work from the National Drug Codes formulary or from a customized list for frequently prescribed

Description of products does not indicate or imply endorsement by the Oncology Nursing Forum *or the Oncology Nursing Society.*

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