General Requirements for Master Formula and Specifications for Non-Biological Products

Master Formula

The following information should be included in the master formula of a pharmaceutical product (PP):

(a) name of the product;
(b) description of the dose form;
(c) strength of the product;
(d) name(s) of all active ingredient(s) and the amount on a per-unit basis;
(e) list of all excipients with the following information:
- their non-proprietary names;
- their amount on a per-unit basis;
- their functions; and
- colour Index numbers or E-numbers for all the colourants used (including capsule shells), if applicable; and

(f) overage with justification, if applicable.

Master formula of a PP should be issued by the manufacturer of the product. The certificate holder may include the appropriate references on quality standards of the active ingredients and excipients (e.g. pharmacopoeial monographs or manufacturer's in-house specifications).

Questions and Answers on the Master Formula:

1. What are the particular requirements for the change of excipients of a PP?

In general, the certificate holder is required to provide the proposed master formula, specifications, and stability reports to support the application for the change of excipients of a PP. Process validation reports may be required when applicable. When the application is related to minor variation of excipient(s) and is supported by justifications, process validation reports may not be required.

2. Is it required to include the overage of active ingredient in the master formula?

If there is overage of active ingredient, the information should be included in the master formula of the registered PP. Hence, any change of overage of active ingredient in the master formula shall require prior approval for change of registered particulars of the PP (i.e. CORP application).

3. When a substance (e.g. alcohol as solvent) is used in the manufacturing process but would not be detected in the final product, is the information required to be included in the master formula?

In general, when a substance is used in the manufacturing process but would not be detected in the final product (e.g. alcohol used in granulation of a solid dose form will be evaporated during the manufacturing process), the information is not required to be included in the master formula; but should be clearly recorded in other manufacturing documents (e.g. manufacturing process and records).

4. If there is a change in the quality standard of active ingredients or excipients, is CORP application required?

If the quality standard of active ingredients or excipients has been stated in the master formula of the registered PP, then CORP application and statutory approval are required for change of quality standard of the ingredients (e.g. from BP to USP quality standard).

5. If there is a change in the form of active ingredient of a registered PP, is CORP application required?

Physical form of the active ingredient is not required to be stated in the master formula. However, if the specific physical form of the active ingredient is stated in the master formula of a registered PP, then CORP application and prior approval are required for any change of the physical form of the active ingredient.

6. How should the names and quantities of active ingredients and excipients be expressed in the master formula?

The names of the ingredients should be expressed by either the names in the Poisons List as stipulated in the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance or the World Health Organization (WHO)'s international non-proprietary names (INNs) in the master formula. Besides, the quantities of the ingredients should be expressed on a per-unit basis in the master formula.

Meanwhile, applicants should refer to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance and Regulations for the legal requirements on labelling of pharmaceutical products, including the names and quantities of the active ingredients.

Specifications

The following information should be included in the specifications of a PP:

(a) name of the product;
(b) description of the dose form;
(c) the relevant tests for final release of the finished product and their acceptance criteria;
(d) *type of container and closure of the product;
(e) *storage conditions and any special handling precautions, if applicable; and
(f) *shelf-life of the product.

(*note: A declaration can be made by the applicant stating that the information on the type of container, closure system, storage conditions or shelf-life of the product have been provided in separate documents inside the dossier and will form part of the specifications.)

Questions and Answers on the Specifications:

1. What general tests should be included in the specifications of a PP?

The following tests are generally required -:

(a) physical description (e.g. size, shape, color, etc.);
(b) identification of the active ingredient;
(c) assay of the active ingredient; and
(d) impurities, if applicable.

Note: Specific tests may be required in the specifications for different products. Certificate holders should refer to the appropriate pharmacopoeial or reputable references (e.g. ICH and WHO guidelines) for details of the relevant tests and their corresponding requirements.

2. Is CORP application required for change of method of analysis?

Method of analysis is not a registered particular, but is required in the application for registration of a PP. Therefore, change of method of analysis of the PP should be provided to DH Drug Office for record purposes. Besides, certificate holder is reminded to comply with the "change control" GMP requirements, if applicable.

December 2016