Drug News
藥 物 情 報

Issue Number 67

This is a monthly digest of local and overseas drug safety news released by the Drug Office of the Department of Health in May 2015 with relevant information update before publish. For the latest news and information, please refer to public announcements or the website of the Drug Office of the Department of Health (http://www.drugoffice.gov.hk).

Safety Update

Canada: Recall of Apo-Risperidone Solution 1mg/ml

On 7 May 2015, Health Canada announced that Apotex Inc. was recalling one batch of Apo-Risperidone Solution 1mg/ml (lot no.: KV2168) to the wholesaler level as the product lot may not meet organic impurity specifications throughout the shelf life of the product. Health Canada classified the hazard level of the recall as Type III, i.e. a situation in which the use of, or exposure to, a product is not likely to cause any adverse health consequences.

In Hong Kong, Apo-Risperidone Oral Solution 1mg/ml (HK-57547) is a pharmaceutical product registered by Hind Wing Co. Ltd. (Hind Wing), and is a prescription only medicine. On 29 April 2015, Hind Wing notified the Department of Health (DH) of the incident, and confirmed that the affected batch KV2168 had been imported into Hong Kong and was distributed to private doctors. As on 25 June 2015, the DH had not received any adverse drug reaction reports related to the product. In line with the Health Canada announcement to recall the product batch to the wholesaler level, Hind Wing had quarantined the remaining stock of the affected product batch for disposal.

US: FDA warns SGLT2 inhibitors may result in a serious condition of too much acid in the blood

On 15 May 2015, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued warning that the type 2 diabetes medicines canagliflozin, dapagliflozin, and empagliflozin may lead to ketoacidosis, a serious condition where the body produces high levels of blood acids called ketones that may require hospitalization. FDA is continuing to investigate this safety issue and will determine whether changes are needed in the prescribing information for this class of drugs, called sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 (SGLT2) inhibitors.

SGLT2 inhibitors are a class of prescription medicines that are FDA-approved for use with diet and exercise to lower blood sugar in adults with type 2 diabetes. When untreated, type 2 diabetes can lead to serious problems, including blindness, nerve and kidney damage, and heart disease. SGLT2 inhibitors lower blood sugar by causing the kidneys to remove sugar from the body through the urine. These medicines are available as single-ingredient products and also in combination with other diabetes medicines such as metformin.

Patients should pay close attention for any signs of ketoacidosis and seek medical attention immediately if they experience symptoms such as difficulty breathing, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, confusion, and unusual fatigue or sleepiness. Do not stop or change your diabetes medicines without first talking to your prescriber.

Health care professionals should evaluate for the presence of acidosis, including ketoacidosis, in patients experiencing these signs or symptoms; discontinue SGLT2 inhibitors if acidosis is confirmed; and take appropriate measures to correct the acidosis and monitor sugar levels.

In Hong Kong, there are two registered pharmaceutical products containing canagliflozin, namely Invokana Tablets 100mg (HK-63499) and Invokana Tablets 300mg (HK-63500) which are registered by Johnson & Johnson (Hong Kong) Ltd., and two registered pharmaceutical products containing dapagliflozin, namely Forxiga Tablet 5mg (HK-63301) and Forxiga Tablet 10mg (HK-

63302) which are registered by Astrazeneca Hong Kong Ltd. All of the products are prescription only medicines. As on 25 June 2015, the DH had received one adverse drug reaction (ADR) report on Forxiga, which is related to hyponatraemia/ ketoacidosis/ dizziness, while the DH had not received any ADR report on Invokana. As FDA is continuing to investigate the safety issue and has not yet decided on whether the prescribing information of this class of drugs need to be updated, the DH remains vigilant on the updates from the FDA and other overseas regulatory authorities for consideration of any actions deemed necessary.

UK: Increased risk of retinopathy in preterm infants with the use of epoetin beta (NeoRecormon) cannot be excluded

On 20 May 2015, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) announced that possible increased risk of retinopathy with epoetin beta in premature infants calls for careful consideration of options for preventing anaemia of prematurity.

Epoetin beta (NeoRecormon) is licensed for the prevention of anaemia of prematurity in infants with a birth weight of 0.75 to 1.5 kg and a gestational age of less than 34 weeks. Epoetin beta is identical to erythropoietin, a hormone that stimulates the production of red blood cells.

Infants born before 31 weeks of gestation, particularly those weighing less than 1.25 kg have an underlying risk of retinopathy of prematurity.

A European review has considered the current evidence for retinopathy associated with epoetin beta treatment of anaemia of prematurity. Two Cochrane systematic reviews assessed the effectiveness of treatment of anaemia with erythropoietin in premature and/or low birth weight infants. One focused on treatment started within 7 days after birth, the other studied treatment started 8 to 28 days after birth. The systematic reviews also considered adverse effects, including retinopathy of prematurity.

Taken together, the 2 systematic reviews suggest that epoetin beta may increase the underlying risk of retinopathy in premature infants.

The summary of product characteristics will be amended to include this possible risk of retinopathy. The European review of available data concluded that more data are needed to draw a firm conclusion about erythropoietin and the risk of retinopathy of prematurity. However, the available data show that an increase in the underlying risk of retinopathy in premature infants with early epoetin use cannot be excluded.

Healthcare professionals are advised of the following when using epoetin beta for preventing anaemia of prematurity:

- consider the benefits and risks, including the possible risk of retinopathy
- monitor the infant for features of retinopathy
- advise parents or carers that their baby's eyes will be carefully monitored for any ill effects

In Hong Kong, there are 11 registered pharmaceutical products containing epoetin beta under the brand name of Recormon. All products are prescription only medicines registered by Roche Hong Kong Limited. One of the licensed indications of Recormon is for the prevention of anaemia of prematurity. As on 25 June 2015, the DH had not received any adverse drug reaction reports related to Recormon. In view of the MHRA's announcement, letters to healthcare professionals were issued to draw their attention to the warning on 21 May 2015, and the matter will be discussed in the meeting of the Pharmacy and Poisons (Registration of Pharmaceutical Products and Substances: Certification of Clinical Trial/ Medicinal Test) Committee of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board.

Drug Recall

Recall 5 batches of Eprex 1000iu (HK-39774), 4000iu (HK-39776) and 5000iu (HK-49846) Prefilled Syringe

On 18 May 2015, the DH endorsed a licensed drug wholesaler, Johnson & Johnson (Hong Kong) Ltd. (Johnson & Johnson), to voluntarily recall 5 batches of Eprex 1000 Prefilled Syringe 1000iu/0.5ml, Eprex 4000 Prefilled Syringe 4000iu/0.4ml and Eprex 5000 Prefilled Syringe 5000iu/0.5ml (registration number: HK-39774, HK -39776 and HK-49846 respectively) that had been supplied locally from wholesalers due to potential quality issue. In other words, Johnson and Johnson had stopped the supply of the affected batches of the products. The affected batches were EBS4F00 (1000iu), EAS4300, EBS5C00 and EJS6Q00 (4000iu) and EAS4100 (5000iu).

The DH received notification from Johnson & Johnson that the impurity content of certain batches of the products was found to be elevated during stability testing by its manufacturer. Although the levels of the impurity were still within specification, Johnson & Johnson decided to recall the affected batches as a precautionary measure. According to Johnson & Johnson, only five of these affected batches were imported into Hong Kong. Since the affected batches did not fail the specifications of the products, risk posed by the issue is negligible.

Eprex 1000iu, 4000iu & 5000iu Prefilled Syringe, containing recombinant human erythropoietin epoetin alfa, is a prescription medicine used for treatment of anemia associated with chronic renal failure. According to Johnson & Johnson, 269 packs of 6 prefilled syringes of the affected batches had been supplied to private doctors, private hospitals and public hospitals. As on 18 May 2015, the DH had not received any adverse reports in connection with the products. A notice was released on the website of the Drug Office on the same day to alert the public of the recall.

Recall of Xylmol Ointment (HK-45835)

On 18 May 2015, the DH endorsed a licensed drug wholesaler, Loyal Advance Ltd (Loyal Advance), to conduct a voluntary recall of Xylmol Ointment (registration number: HK-45835) from shelf due to potential quality issue.

The DH noted that the Taiwan drug regulatory authority announced the recall of the product because the product contained non-compliant active ingredient. According to the manufacturer in Taiwan, one of the active ingredients of the product, zinc oxide, is not approved for use in Taiwan. The manufacturer confirmed to recall the product as a precautionary measure. The DH has contacted the Taiwan authority for further information about the issue.

Xylmol Ointment, containing lignocaine, zinc oxide, aluminium acetate and hydrocotrisone, is indicated for the treatment of haemorrhoids. It can only be supplied at pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist.

According to Loyal Advance, the product was supplied to local pharmacies and private doctors. As on 18 May 2015, the DH had not received any adverse reports in connection with the above product. The DH closely monitored the recall. A notice was released on the website of the Drug Office on the same day to alert the public of the recall.

People who have purchased and used the above product should consult their healthcare providers for advice if in doubt.

Recall of Xylmol Suppository (HK-46432) and Xyliderm Cream (HK-52644)

Further to the recall of Xylmol Ointment announced on 18 May 2015, the DH endorsed the licensed drug wholesalers, Loyal Advance Ltd (Loyal Advance) and Wings Pharmaceutical Ltd (Wings), to recall respectively Xylmol Suppository (registration number: HK-46432) and Xyliderm Cream (registration number: HK-52644) from shelves on 19 May 2015 as these two products also contain a non-compliant ingredient, zinc oxide, which is not approved for use in Taiwan. The manufacturer of these products in Taiwan confirmed the further recall action as a precautionary measure. The DH has contacted the Taiwan authority for further information about the issue.

Xylmol Suppository, containing lignocaine, zinc oxide, aluminium acetate and hydrocortisone, can only be supplied at pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist while

Drug Recall

Xyliderm Cream, containing bismuth oxide and zinc oxide, is an over-the-counter medicine. Both products are indicated for the treatment of haemorrhoids.

According to Loyal Advance and Wings, Xylmol Suppository was supplied to local pharmacies and private doctors while Xyliderm Cream was supplied to local medicine companies, pharmacies and private doctors and exported to Macau. As on 19 May 2015, the DH had not received any adverse reports in connection with the above products. The DH closely monitored the recall. A notice was released on the website of the Drug Office on the same day to alert the public of the recall.

People who have purchased and used the above products should consult their healthcare providers for advice if in doubt.

Recall of Scopam S.C. Tablets 10mg (Jen Sheng) (HK-55061) and Azeic-A Cream 20% (HK-47622)

On 26 May 2015, the DH endorsed two licensed drug wholesalers, Lanway Ltd (Lanway) and Wings Pharmaceutical Ltd (Wings), to respectively recall from shelves one batch of Scopam S.C. Tablets 10mg (Jen Sheng) (registration number: HK-55061, batch number:3030, expiry date: June 7, 2016) and one batch of Azeic-A Cream 20% (registration number: HK-47622, batch number: 000611, expiry date: November 2, 2019) as both pharmaceutical products contain ingredients that have not been approved for use in Taiwan and may have potential quality issues. The Taiwan manufacturers of these two products confirmed the recall as a precautionary measure.

Scopam S.C. Tablets 10mg (Jen Sheng), containing hyoscine butylbromide, is indicated for the treatment of gastrointestinal spasm. It can only be supplied at pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist. Azeic-A Cream 20%, containing azelaic acid, is an over-the-counter medicine for the treatment of acne.

According to Lanway and Wings, the affected batch of Scopam S.C. Tablets 10mg (Jen Sheng) was supplied to local pharmacies and private doctors, while Azeic-A Cream 20% was supplied to a local medicine company. As on 26 May 2015, the DH had not received any adverse reports in connection with the above products. The DH closely monitored the recall. A notice was released on the website of the Drug Office on the same day to alert the public of the recall.

People who have purchased and used either of the above products should consult healthcare professionals for advice if in doubt.

Drug Incident

DH raids retail shops for suspected illegal sale and possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products

On 14 May 2015, the DH raided two retail shops in Sheung Shui for suspected illegal sale and possession of Part I poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products.

During the DH's market surveillance, it was found that the shops were offering for sale various types of cold and cough liquid medicines labelled in Japanese for children. They are suspected to be unregistered pharmaceutical products as Hong Kong registration numbers could not be found on any of them. These liquid medicines were labelled as containing methylephedrine as one of the active ingredients. One of them was also labelled as containing dihydrocodeine.

Medicines containing methylephedrine or dihydrocodeine are Part I poisons. They are mainly used in preparations for the relief of cold and cough symptoms. Side effects of methylephedrine include tachycardia, anxiety, restlessness and insomnia while dihydrocodeine may cause nausea, vomiting and constipation. Parents should not use cough and cold medicines to treat children aged under 6 without advice from healthcare professionals.

Members of the public who have bought the above products should stop using them immediately. They should consult healthcare professionals for advice if they are in doubt or their children feel unwell after using the products concerned.

DH raids retail shop for suspected illegal sale of unregistered pharmaceutical products

On 26 May 2015, the DH raided a retail shop in Yuen Long for the suspected illegal sale and possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products labelled to contain Part I poison in a joint operation with the Police.

Acting upon a public complaint, it was found that the shop was offering for sale two cream products, namely Obagi Medical Tretinoin Cream, USP 0.1 per cent and USP 0.05 per cent, which were labelled to contain tretinoin, a Part I poison. Products containing tretinoin are prescription medicines which should only be used on the advice of a doctor or supplied at pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist upon a doctor's prescription. A woman aged 20 was arrested by the Police for suspected illegal sale and possession of Part I poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products in the operation.

Tretinoin is used topically for the treatment of acne. Its side-effects include erythema, dryness, peeling and photosensitivity. Sensitive individuals may experience oedema, blistering and crusting of the skin.

Members of the public should not use controlled medicines on their own without advice from a doctor. They should not buy or use pharmaceutical products that are not registered.

People who have purchased the above products should stop using them and consult healthcare professionals if they are in doubt or feeling unwell after use.

Woman arrested for suspected illegal sale of unregistered pharmaceutical products with controlled drug ingredient

On 29 May 2015, a woman aged 34 was arrested for suspected illegal sale of unregistered pharmaceutical products labelled to contain a Part I poison, orlistat, in a joint operation by the DH and the Police.

Acting upon a public complaint, it was found that two slimming products, namely Olidown and ZERO-X, both labelled as containing 120mg of orlistat were being offered for sale online. Hong Kong pharmaceutical registration number was not found on both product labels. Products containing orlistat are Part I poisons which should only be sold at pharmacies under the supervision of a registered pharmacist.

Orlistat is used for the treatment of obesity. Its side-effects include faecal urgency, fatty stool, increased frequency of defaecation, faecal incontinence, headache and abdominal pain. Severe liver injuries may also be induced.

Weight control should be achieved through a balanced diet and appropriate exercise. The public should consult healthcare professionals before using any medication for weight control. They should not use controlled medicines on their own without advice from a doctor.

People who have purchased the above products should stop using them and consult healthcare professionals if they are in doubt or feeling unwell after use.

A product containing any western drug ingredient must be registered under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance before it can be sold in Hong Kong. Part I poisons should be sold at registered pharmacies under the supervision of registered pharmacists. Illegal sale or possession of Part I poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products are offences under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap 138). The maximum penalty is a fine of $100,000 and two years' imprisonment for each offence. Antibiotics can only be supplied at registered pharmacies by registered pharmacists or under their supervision and upon a doctor's prescription. They should only be used under the advice of a doctor. Illegal sale or possession of antibiotics are offences under the Antibiotics Ordinance (Cap 137) and the maximum penalty is a $30,000 fine and one year's imprisonment for each offence.

All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format of "HK-XXXXX". The products mentioned in the above incidents were not registered pharmaceutical products under the Ordinance in Hong Kong. Their safety, quality and efficacy cannot be guaranteed. Members of the public were exhorted not to use products of unknown or doubtful composition. They should stop using the aforementioned products immediately if they had them in their possession and to consult healthcare professionals if they felt unwell after taking the products. The products should be destroyed or disposed properly, or submitted to the Department's Drug Office during office hours.

Useful Contact

Drug Complaint:

Tel: 2572 2068

Fax: 3904 1224

E-mail: pharmgeneral@dh.gov.hk

Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR) Reporting:

Tel: 2319 2920

Fax: 2319 6319

E-mail: adr@dh.gov.hk

Link: http://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/adr.html

Post: ***Pharmacovigilance Unit,***
Drug Office, Department of Health,
Rm 1856, 18/F, Wu Chung House,
213 Queen's Road East,
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

The purpose of Drug News is to provide healthcare professionals with a summary of local and overseas drug safety news released. Healthcare professionals are advised to keep update with the information and provide corresponding advice or therapeutic measure to patients and public.