

衛生署藥物辦公室
藥物註冊及進出口管制部

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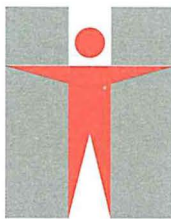
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DRUG OFFICE
DRUG REGISTRATION AND
IMPORT/EXPORT CONTROL DIVISION
3/F., Public Health Laboratory Centre,
382 Nam Cheong Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong

1 December 2015

Dear Healthcare Professionals,

Allopurinol and 6-mercaptopurine/azathioprine: Potential interaction

Your attention is drawn to the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) announcement regarding potential interaction between allopurinol and 6-mercaptopurine/azathioprine.

Allopurinol is an anti-uricaemic agent used to treat gout, uric acid nephrolithiasis and states of hyperuricaemia, including the prevention of tumour-lysis syndrome.

Azathioprine is an imidazole derivative of 6-mercaptopurine that is used as an immunosuppressant, while 6-mercaptopurine is used as a cytotoxic agent.

There are warnings regarding the potential interactions between allopurinol and 6-mercaptopurine/azathioprine in the respective Product Information (PI) in Australia. Also, the Consumer Medicine Information leaflets for these medicines advise patients to tell their doctor if they are taking the other medicines linked to this interaction.

Allopurinol reduces metabolism of 6-mercaptopurine and azathioprine, significantly increasing the risk of potentially fatal bone marrow toxicities and blood dyscrasias, including leukopenia, thrombocytopenia and pancytopenia.

Health professionals are reminded that the concomitant use of allopurinol and 6-mercaptopurine/azathioprine should be avoided if possible. However, if co-administration of these medicines is necessary, the dose of 6-mercaptopurine or azathioprine should be reduced to only one quarter of the normal dose and the patient's complete blood count should be closely monitored in accordance with the PI. It is recommended that, when prescribing azathioprine or 6-mercaptopurine, health professionals should check that their patient is not being treated with allopurinol and educate patient about this medicine interaction.


Please refer to the TGA's website for details:

<https://www.tga.gov.au/publication-issue/medicines-safety-update-volume-6-number-6-december-2015>

In Hong Kong, there are 46 registered pharmaceutical products containing allopurinol, 2 registered products containing mercaptopurine and 10 registered products containing azathioprine. Allopurinol is a pharmacy-only medicine, while mercaptopurine and azathioprine are prescription-only medicines. So far, the Department of Health (DH) has not received any adverse drug reaction case related to interactions between allopurinol and 6-mercaptopurine/azathioprine leading to bone marrow toxicities and blood dyscrasias. In view of the above TGA announcement, the matter will be discussed by the Registration Committee of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board. Healthcare professionals are advised to balance the risk of possible adverse effects against the benefit of treatment.

Please report any adverse events caused by drugs to the Pharmacovigilance Unit of the DH (tel. no.: 2319 2920, fax: 2319 6319 or email: adr@dh.gov.hk). For details, please refer to the website at Drug Office under "ADR Reporting": <http://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/adr.html>. You may wish to visit the Drug Office's website for subscription and browsing of "Drug News" which is a monthly digest of drug safety news and information issued by Drug Office.

Yours faithfully,



(Grant NG)

for Assistant Director (Drug)