

Monthly briefings are produced in order to help members of the media and other interested groups understand the work and advice of the Scottish Medicines Consortium. The full advice for each drug that we have assessed can be found at [www.scottishmedicines.org](http://www.scottishmedicines.org).

SMC has this month accepted the following drugs for use within NHSScotland.

## pegylated interferon alfa 2b (ViraferonPeg<sup>®</sup>) powder for solution for injection in combination with ribavirin (Rebetol<sup>®</sup>) 200 mg capsules

SMC has accepted ViraferonPeg<sup>®</sup> in combination with ribavirin for the treatment of chronic hepatitis C in adult patients who have failed previous treatment with interferon alfa alone or together with ribavirin.

- Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. There are many causes eg alcohol abuse or viral infection. Hepatitis C is a virus that is transmitted by infected blood. The disease is known as chronic (persistent) when a person has the infection long term. Symptoms can include muscle ache, tiredness, pain and jaundice. Some people with hepatitis have no symptoms.
- ViraferonPeg<sup>®</sup> is a drug given by injection to help reduce the Hepatitis C virus in the body. The active ingredient in ViraferonPeg<sup>®</sup> belongs to a group of natural substances produced by the body (called interferons). These substances help the body fight against attacks by infections such as viruses. Ribavirin is a drug given as a capsule by mouth which increases the effect of ViraferonPeg<sup>®</sup>.
- A study of patients who had failed to respond to or relapsed after receiving treatment has shown that 23% had no hepatitis C virus in their blood 24 weeks after treatment with ViraferonPeg<sup>®</sup> and ribavirin.
- The study did not raise any new safety issues.
- SMC accepted ViraferonPeg<sup>®</sup> plus ribavirin because it offers value for money.

## About SMC

The purpose of the Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) is to accept for use those newly licensed drugs that clearly represent good value for money to NHSScotland.

SMC analyses information supplied by the drug manufacturer on the health benefits of the drug and justification of its price.

Because the NHS has limited resources, SMC works to make sure that those drugs which represent good value for money are accepted for routine use as quickly as possible so that they can benefit patients.

The Consortium is made up of lead clinicians, pharmacists and health economists together with representatives of health boards, the pharmaceutical industry, the public and the Scottish Government.

### ■ Contact Details

If you are interested in the work of SMC you can visit our website at:

[www.scottishmedicines.org.uk](http://www.scottishmedicines.org.uk)

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### ■ Media Contact

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## lidocaine 5% medicated plaster (Versatis®)

SMC has accepted lidocaine 5% medicated plaster for restricted use in the treatment of neuropathic pain associated with previous herpes zoster infection (post-herpetic neuralgia) in patients for whom first-line systemic therapies are not effective or tolerated.

- Post-herpetic neuralgia is the name given to pain which may develop due to damage to the nerves in the skin after a person has had shingles.
- Lidocaine plasters contain a local anaesthetic (a type of drug that reduces sensation) to relieve pain in the skin.
- A study suggests that lidocaine plasters are at least as effective at reducing pain as one other drug used for post-herpetic neuralgia.
- The amount of lidocaine which enters the body from the plasters is low so there are few side effects.
- SMC accepted lidocaine plasters for restricted use within NHSScotland because it offers an alternative to existing treatments, has few side effects and offers reasonable value for money.

## clobetasol propionate 0.05% shampoo (Etrivex®)

SMC has accepted clobetasol propionate shampoo for the topical treatment of moderate scalp psoriasis in adults.

- Psoriasis is a skin disease which causes red, raised skin patches that produce dead, flaky skin cells. It can affect any part of the body. Scalp psoriasis is caused when the skin cells of the scalp are produced too quickly. Symptoms include red, itchy and sometimes painful skin.
- The active agent in clobetasol shampoo belongs to a group of medicines called topical (meaning applied to the skin) corticosteroids. It reduces the redness, itchiness and inflammation of scalp psoriasis.
- A study has shown that clobetasol shampoo worked almost as well as another product containing clobetasol (clobetasol gel). Clobetasol shampoo was not compared with commonly used clobetasol products so it is not known if the shampoo works as well as these other treatments.
- There is some evidence that clobetasol shampoo is safer than other clobetasol products.
- SMC accepted clobetasol shampoo for use within NHSScotland because it extends the choice of treatment for this condition and costs about the same as existing treatments.

SMC decided that the following drugs are not value for money for NHSScotland.

## rabbit anti-human thymocyte immunoglobulin 25mg powder for solution for infusion (Thymoglobuline®)

SMC did not recommend Thymoglobuline® for prevention of graft rejection in renal (kidney) transplantation.

- In transplant surgery, there is a risk that the body will reject the newly transplanted organ.
- Thymoglobuline® is a medicine which slows the body's immune system to help prevent it from rejecting the new organ.
- A study has shown that the rate of kidney rejection shortly after transplantation was lower in patients treated with Thymoglobuline® than in patients treated with an alternative drug. However, this did not cause an improvement in the survival of the patient or transplanted kidney.
- The frequency of infections experienced by patients treated with Thymoglobuline® in some studies was higher than in patients treated with the alternative drug.
- SMC did not accept Thymoglobuline® for use within NHSScotland because the case submitted by the manufacturer failed to show that the costs and benefits of the drug would offer good value for money.

## teriparatide (Forsteo®)

SMC did not recommend teriparatide for the treatment of osteoporosis in men at increased risk of fracture.

- Bone is made of collagen fibres and calcium. As people get older some of the bone calcium is lost and the bones become weaker. If a lot of bone is lost, the condition is called osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is more likely in women especially after the menopause, however it also occurs in men. People with osteoporosis have bones that will break or fracture more easily than normal.
- Teriparatide is a drug which makes bones stronger and reduces the risk of fracture.
- A study has shown that the increase in bone density (a measure of bone strength) was greater in patients treated with teriparatide than in patients treated with placebo (a dummy treatment that does not contain an active drug). In the two years following treatment, fractures of the spine were less common in patients treated with teriparatide.
- The incidence of side effects in the study was similar in patients treated with teriparatide and patients treated with placebo.
- SMC did not accept teriparatide for use within NHSScotland because the economic case submitted by the manufacturer failed to show that the drug is good value for money.

## trabectedin (Yondelis®)

SMC did not recommend trabectedin for the treatment of patients with advanced soft tissue sarcoma (STS) after failure of anthracyclines and ifosfamide (types of chemotherapy) or who are unsuited to receive these agents.

- Soft tissue sarcomas are cancers that develop from the cells of the soft tissues of the body, such as muscles, fat or blood vessels.
- Trabectedin is a new anticancer drug which works by damaging the DNA of the cancer cells and stopping them from growing and multiplying. It is given by a drip.
- A study has shown that trabectedin was of some benefit in patients with certain types of STS (called L-sarcomas) but there was no significant difference in overall survival. There were no studies comparing trabectedin with other types of chemotherapy.
- As with other drugs of this type, the side effects of trabectedin are significant and include nausea and vomiting.
- SMC did not accept trabectedin for use within NHSScotland because the economic case submitted by the manufacturer failed to show that the drug offers good value for money.

## buprenorphine transdermal patches 5, 10 and 20 microgram/hour 7-day formulation (BuTrans®)

SMC did not recommend buprenorphine transdermal patches for the treatment of severe opioid responsive pain conditions which are not adequately responding to non-opioid analgesics.

- An opioid analgesic is a pain-killing drug like morphine. Opioid analgesics are very effective pain killers but can also have unpleasant side effects so these drugs are often only used for severe, long-lasting pain that does not respond to a milder, non-opioid pain killer. Osteoarthritis is a condition that causes stiffness, pain and loss of movement in joints such as knees and hips. Opioid analgesics are sometimes used in patients with severe osteoarthritis pain if other pain killers are not suitable or do not relieve the pain.
- BuTrans® is a patch which contains an opioid analgesic called buprenorphine. The patch is applied to the skin then buprenorphine passes through the skin into the blood.
- A study has shown that buprenorphine patches plus paracetamol tablets (a non-opioid pain killer) had an effect similar to tablets containing codeine (another opioid analgesic) plus paracetamol.
- In the study side effects included skin reactions typical to patches and nausea, dizziness and vomiting.
- SMC did not accept buprenorphine patches for use within NHSScotland because cheaper alternatives are available and the evidence submitted by the manufacturer failed to show that the drug offers good value for money.

For drugs that have not been accepted by SMC, all NHS boards have procedures in place to consider individual requests when a doctor feels the drug would be right for a particular patient. SMC has told the manufacturers why the drug was not accepted and would be pleased to receive any resubmission.

For further information and to view the complete advice for the drugs listed above, visit our website at:

**[www.scottishmedicines.org.uk](http://www.scottishmedicines.org.uk)**