

STOPP/START – better prescribing for patient safety

A new medication review system has the potential to reduce the prescription of unnecessary, or potentially harmful, drugs to older people in hospital, thereby improving patient safety and substantially reducing prescription costs.

Researchers in UCC have confirmed the validity of a new medication review system, called STOPP (Screening Tool of Older Persons' potentially inappropriate Prescriptions) and START (Screening Tool to Alert to Right Treatment).

It was created to help doctors and pharmacists avoid potential prescribing errors in older patients and to highlight when practitioners do not prescribe medication that would actually be of benefit to this age group.

The research looked at clinical and prescription details relating to more than 700 older patients in an acute hospital setting and applied the STOPP/START criteria.

"We found that one in every three of these patients received at least one potentially inappropriate drug," said lead researcher Dr Paul Gallagher.

"A third of this group displayed symptoms attributa-

ble to adverse side effects of inappropriately prescribed drugs. We also found that over 40 per cent of patients were not receiving appropriate medication for common conditions including diabetes, stroke and osteoporosis.

"By comparing the findings with similar cohorts of patients in six other European cities and getting similar results, the UCC group has helped to highlight the issue of inappropriate prescribing internationally as part of the global need to improve the quality and safety of prescribing practices.

STOPP/START recommendations and criteria have now been implemented as an audit tool in several countries, resulting in significant improvements in prescribing quality. Further research is underway to find out if routine application of STOPP/START criteria reduces adverse drug reactions and prescription costs among older people admitted to hospital.

Funded by the Health Research Board (HRB) the information on this research is contained in 'The Picture of Health' a snapshot of the positive impacts and outcomes from HRB funded research in 2009.

Free information pack for prostate suffers and carers

The launch of the free Astellas Pharma Living with Prostate Cancer information pack took place in December. The pack was launched by actor Tom Hopkins (aka Christy in Fair City), John Dowling, prostate cancer survivor, Lillian McGovern, CEO of The Marie Keating Foundation and Ms Aine Brady, Minister for Older People and Health Promotion.



With over 2,500 men diagnosed with prostate cancer in Ireland each year, the initial diagnosis period can be difficult for the patient and their family to take in all the information they need. In answer to this Astellas Pharma produced the free prostate cancer information pack which provides easy to read, understandable, friendly and essential reading for sufferers, family and friends of those affected with prostate cancer.

Entitled Living with Prostate Cancer – The Patient Support Pack it is available free of charge by calling 01 6697684. The patient support pack covers a number of key information areas. The additional aim of the Pack is to heighten awareness of the symptoms in order to encourage potential prostate suffers to seek treatment, increase their knowledge of support services available and also to be used as a patient information tool.

"We welcome this initiative and are pleased to support Astellas in a campaign to provide prostate cancer sufferers with information that is provided to them rather than the patient or his family members having to seek and find. Information at the time of diagnosis is crucial; it can help to keep emotions calm during a difficult period. This booklet will allow a sufferer or their family member to sit down at their own pace and review the road ahead" said Jim Scott, chairman of Men Against Cancer (MAC).

dabl Ltd wins excellence award

dabl Ltd has been announced as a winner at the Medical Technology Industry Excellence Awards in Galway. Beating off stiff competition, the award was received for developing and commercialising an online blood pressure diagnostic service which helps pharmacies to expand its role in the accurate diagnosis and management of chronic diseases in the community.

Known as dabl ABPM Pharmacy, the innovative service provides an automatic expert diagnostic report for blood pressure readings which are captured over 24 hours by a validated device. The evidence based, computer generated interpretative report allows pharmacies to offer a professional service to a level which was formerly the preserve of Specialists.

This accolade follows the publication of a scientific study which reported that dabl ABPM Pharmacy is the most accurate and consistent way of interpreting ABPM data as the human error factor is removed (*Blood Pressure Monitoring 2010, 15:115–123*).

NEW for localised burning, shooting, stabbing pains



Versatis should be used for the treatment of localised neuropathic pain associated with post-herpetic neuralgia

versatis[®]
5% lidocaine medicated plaster
WORKS WHERE IT HURTS

Prescribing Information

Versatis 5% medicated plaster. Refer to the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) for full details on side effects, warnings and contra-indications before prescribing.
Presentation: Versatis is a medicated plaster (10cm x 14cm) containing 700 mg (5% w/w) of lidocaine (50mg lidocaine per gram adhesive base). **Indication:** Symptomatic relief of neuropathic pain associated with previous herpes zoster infection (post-herpetic neuralgia, PHN). **Dosage and method of administration:** Adults and elderly patients: The painful area should be covered with plaster once daily for up to 12 hours followed by at least a 12 hour plaster-free interval. Plasters may be cut to size. Use of more than three plasters at the same time is not recommended. Apply the plaster to intact, dry, non-irritated skin (after healing of the shingles). Remove hairs in affected area with scissors (do not shave). Remove the plaster from sachet and its surface liner before applying immediately to the skin. Re-evaluate treatment after 2 to 4 weeks. Reassess treatment regularly to adjust dosing or plaster-free period as required. **Patients under 18 years:** Not recommended. **Contra-indications:** Hypersensitivity to active substance, any excipients, or local anaesthetics of amide type (e.g. bupivacaine, etidocaine, mepivacaine and prilocaine). Do not apply to inflamed or injured skin (e.g. active herpes zoster lesions, atopic dermatitis or wounds). **Special warnings and precautions:** Should not apply to mucous membranes or the eyes. Plasters contain propylene glycol which may cause skin irritation, methyl parahydroxybenzoate and propyl parahydroxybenzoate which may cause allergic reactions. Use with caution in patients with severe cardiac impairment, severe renal impairment or severe hepatic impairment. In animals, metabolites of lidocaine have been shown to be genotoxic, carcinogenic and mutagenic, with unknown clinical significance. Consider long term treatment based on therapeutic benefit for the patient. **Interactions:** No clinically relevant interactions have been observed in clinical studies. Absorption of lidocaine from the skin is low. Use with caution in patients receiving Class I antiarrhythmic drugs (e.g. tocainide, mexiletine) or other local anaesthetics due to the risk of additive systemic effects. **Pregnancy and lactation:** Do not use during pregnancy or breast-feeding. **Undesirable effects:** Very common (≥10%): administration site reactions (e.g. erythema, rash, pruritus, burning, dermatitis). Uncommon (≥0.1% – <1%): skin injury, skin lesion. Very rare (<0.01%): anaphylaxis, hypersensitivity, open wound. Adverse reactions were predominantly of mild and moderate intensity. Systemic adverse reactions are unlikely. **Overdose:** Unlikely. If suspected, remove plasters, provide supportive treatment. **Legal classification:** POM. **Marketing Authorisation number and pack size:** PA 1189/9/1, 30 plasters. **Marketing Authorisation Holder:** Grünenthal Ltd, Regus Lakeside House, 1 Furzeground Way, Stockley Park East, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1BD, UK. Additional information is available on request. Any adverse events should be reported to Grünenthal Ltd (telephone +44 870 351 8960). **Date of text:** October 2010, 127/GRT/IRL/VER 10/10 - 10/12.

