



Small Doses.....

By Mike Petry, MS, RPh
Clinical Pharmacist

FDA UPDATE

Safety Label Changes for Simvastatin

Recent review of clinical trials data and submitted adverse event reports on the popular cholesterol lowering drug simvastatin has prompted the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to modify the label information for simvastatin and simvastatin-containing medications (Zocor®, Vytorin®, Simcor®). The data have shown that patients taking simvastatin 80mg had an increased risk of muscle injury compared to patients taking lower doses, or other statin drugs.

The risk of injury is highly associated with:

- use of 80mg of simvastatin within the first year of treatment
- drug-drug interactions with certain medications
- a genetic predisposition for simvastatin-related muscle injury

At this time, the FDA recommends the following:

- Simvastatin 80mg should NOT be prescribed to new patients
- Patients who are unable to adequately lower their level of LDL-C on simvastatin 40mg should NOT be given the higher 80mg dose; instead, they should be placed on alternative LDL-C lowering treatment(s)
- Simvastatin 80mg should be used only in patients who have been taking the dose for at least 12 months or more, and have not experienced any muscle toxicity
- Simvastatin should not be used with certain medications which can raise the level of simvastatin in the body and increase the risk of myopathy

The maximum daily dose of simvastatin should not exceed 10mg if the patient is also taking any of the following drugs:

- Amiodarone (Cordarone®/Pacerone®)
- Verapamil (Calan®/Isoptin®)
- Diltiazem (Cardizem®)

The maximum daily dose of simvastatin should not exceed 20mg if the patient is also taking any of the following drugs:

- Amlodipine (Norvasc®)
- Ranolazine (Ranexa®)

Simvastatin is contraindicated with any of the following drugs:

- Itraconazole (Sporanox®)
- Ketoconazole (Nizoral®)
- Posaconazole (Noxafil®)
- Erythromycin (EryTab®)
- Clarithromycin (Biaxin®)
- Telithromycin (Ketek®)
- HIV protease inhibitors
- Nefazodone (Serzone®)
- Gemfibrozil (Lopid®)
- Cyclosporine (Sandimmune®/Neoral®/Gengraf®)
- Danazol (Danocrine®)

Patients taking simvastatin should be advised to contact their health professional if they experience any of the following symptoms:

- Muscle pain, tenderness or weakness
- Dark or red-colored urine
- Unexplained fatigue

Patients should also be advised to avoid drinking large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

Discontinued Acetaminophen Combination Products

In an attempt to reduce the risk of liver toxicity, the FDA announced in January that by 2014 all acetaminophen containing prescription combination products will be limited to a maximum of 325mg of acetaminophen per dosage form. All manufacturers will also be required to update combination product labels to warn of the potential risk for severe liver injury and allergic reactions. The three year implementation period should allow enough time for product reformulations to be completed and therefore avoid any drug shortages. At this time, the FDA has exempted any acetaminophen containing OTC products.

Hospital pharmacy formularies will need to be updated, and Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee therapeutic interchange protocols for acetaminophen combination products will need to be updated and/or developed.

Sign for hospital nursing in-service.

Signature

Date