

Pharmacy Updates in the New Year

The beginning of 2024 brought new drug product approvals, newly discontinued products, and drug shortages. Highlights of the newest updates to pharmacy practice are described below.

Discontinued Medications

Levemir® (insulin detemir [rDNA origin] injection)

In November 2023, Novo Nordisk announced that they will no longer be manufacturing their long-acting insulin product Levemir®. The decision was based on concerns surrounding manufacturing shortages, along with a decline in prescription coverage.

The Levemir® Flexpen will be officially discontinued on April 1, 2024, with shortages anticipated as early as January 2024. Levemir® vials will be discontinued on December 31, 2024.

It is recommended to convert patients who are currently using Levemir® products to alternative long-acting insulin products, such as insulin glargine (Basaglar, Lantus, Semglee, or Toujeo) or insulin degludec (Tresiba). Of note, adjustments in dosing may be required when converting to an alternative long acting insulin product, as the duration of action of Levemir® is typically less than 24 hours. The GLIN IPA Clinical Pharmacy Team would be happy to assist with necessary product conversions.

General Guidance for Converting from Levemir® (insulin detemir) to Alternative Basal Insulin Products		
Insulin Product	Recommendation	Example
Insulin glargine 100 units/mL products (Lantus, Basaglar, Semglee)	Once daily Levemir® - Recommend substitution on an equivalent unit-per unit basis with further adjustments made based on glucose readings	Levemir® 10 units twice daily → insulin glargine 100U/mL 16 units daily
	Twice daily Levemir® - Recommend a reduction in dose by 20%, with further adjustments based on glucose readings	Levemir® 10 units once daily → insulin glargine 100 units/mL 10 units daily
Insulin glargine 300 units/mL products (Toujeo)	Recommend substitution on an equivalent unit-per-unit basis with further adjustments based on glucose readings	Levemir® 10 units daily → Toujeo (insulin glargine 300 units/mL) 10 units daily
Insulin degludec 100/200 units/mL (Tresiba)	Recommend reduction in dose by 20%, with further adjustments based on glucose readings	Levemir® 10 units daily → Tresiba (insulin degludec) 8 units daily
NPH Insulin products (Novolin N, Humulin N)	Recommend reduction in dose by 20%, with dosing divided based on meal frequency and further adjustments based on glucose readings	Levemir® 10 units daily → NPH insulin 4 units twice daily



Discontinued Medications (continued)

Flovent (fluticasone) HFA & Diskus Inhalers

Starting January 1, 2024, the manufacturer GSK has discontinued all strengths of their Flovent HFA and Diskus inhaler products. The decision to discontinue these products was made given the increase in availability of authorized generic formulations, which provide a cost-effective alternative.

It is recommended to convert patients to available alternative products such as authorized generics of Flovent (fluticasone metered dose inhaler), or the Arnuity Ellipta, which although is not a direct substitute is an alternate fluticasone-based DPI. It should be noted Arnuity Ellipta is a brand name only. Updates to patient prescriptions should be addressed promptly to minimize any disruptions in medication access for patients at the pharmacy.

Camber® Pharmaceuticals hydrocodone-acetaminophen generic tablets

Camber® Pharmaceuticals Inc. recently discontinued production of all generic hydrocodone-acetaminophen products, including hydrocodone-acetaminophen 5-325 mg tablets along with hydrocodone 10-325 mg tablets. The reason for this discontinuation was not provided, and the company is unable to estimate whether or not they will resume production. While many alternative pharmaceutical companies are producing generic hydrocodone-acetaminophen, this discontinuation is contributing to a nationwide shortage of the medication. More information surrounding the current shortages and alternative options are described below.

Medication Shortages

Hydrocodone-acetaminophen 10-325 mg tablet

The United States is currently experiencing a shortage of generic hydrocodone-acetaminophen tablets driven by Camber's discontinuation of the product as noted above, affecting all dosage formulations including 5-325 mg tablets, 7.5-325 mg tablets, and 10-325 mg tablets. This medication is produced by a variety of manufacturers, with many companies being unable to provide reasoning behind the cause of shortages, and others reporting regulatory delays.

Across Western New York, community pharmacies have found that the product experiencing the most severe shortages are hydrocodone-acetaminophen 10-325 mg tablets.

Resolution of this shortage is not able to be predicted at this time and therefore alternative products, strengths, and dosage forms may need to be considered for patients using hydrocodone-acetaminophen products chronically. Alternatives will need to be determined based on local pharmacy availability and insurance coverage limitations, but may include hydrocodone-acetaminophen 10-300 mg, utilizing lower strength tablets as available, and converting to alternative products such as oxycodone-acetaminophen as appropriate. The GLIN IPA Clinical Pharmacy Team would be happy to assist with recommendations for patient specific adjustments to their treatment plans as appropriate, to assist offices in navigating this concern in the setting of these reported concerns with therapy access.



New Products

Lilly Tempo™ Personalized Diabetes Management Platform

The pharmaceutical company Lilly recently released a novel tool for the management of both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, the Tempo™ Personalized Diabetes Management Platform. The platform consists of three components - the reusable Tempo Smart Button®, a compatible app (TempoSmart®), and the Tempo Pen, which is a prefilled insulin pen.

The Tempo Smart Button® is placed on the end of a prefilled insulin pen, and transmits dosing and adherence information to the TempoSmart app® allowing both patients and providers to have a full understanding of any missed doses, incorrect doses, or incorrect timing of administration. Information stored within the smartphone app is available to be shared with healthcare providers.

The TempoSmart® smartphone application can be synced with the Dexcom Continuous Glucose Monitoring systems, along with fitness tracking devices such as FitBit®, Garmin®, Google Fit®, and the Apple Health app.

The Tempo Pen is currently available for Lyumjev® (insulin lispro-aabc) injection, 100 units/mL, Basaglar® (insulin glargine) injection, 100 units/mL, and Humalog® (insulin lispro) injection 100 units/mL.

Cold & Flu Season

Alternatives to Phenylephrine & Pseudoephedrine

With cold and flu season upon us, patients are often seeking over-the-counter remedies to aid with congestion and symptoms of the common cold. Sudafed (pseudoephedrine) and Sudafed PE (phenylephrine) are commonly considered for the relief of congestion however these products are not recommended in patients with hypertension due to the risk of vasoconstriction and agonism of alpha-adrenergic receptors.

Additionally, the FDA concluded that over-the-counter products containing phenylephrine were not proven effective at improving congestion when compared with placebo. The FDA did not raise any concerns for safety surrounding phenylephrine-containing products when used as directed.

Over-the-counter alternatives to phenylephrine and pseudoephedrine in patients with hypertension, include short-term (three (3) days or less) use of Afrin (oxymetazoline) nasal spray, Flonase (fluticasone propionate) nasal spray, and saline sprays and rinses.



References

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