Medicare RAC Program Is Back on Schedule

BY MARY ELLEN SCHNEIDER

The controversial Medicare Rev- erse Audit Contractor program is continuing as planned after federal officials cleared up some contracting disputes.

The rollout of the permanent, na- tional Reverse Audit Contractor (RAC) program is now proceeding, with the full implementation of the program expect- ed across the country by Jan. 1, 2010. Under the program, Medicare contractors with private companies to identify and correct improper payments—both over- and underpayments—made through the Medicare fee-for-service program.

The contractors will be paid on a contingency basis for finding improper payments that they identify. In each additional RAC contractor will employ a full-time medical di- rector to assist in claims review.

During its demonstration phase, the RAC program came under fire from physicians who said it added ad- ministrative hassles and placed the bur- den on physicians to prove that pay- ments they received were correct.

Last November, officials at the Cen- ters for Medicare and Medicaid Ser- vices (CMS) imposed an automatic stay on the pro- gram due to protests filed by two con- tractors who bid unsuccessfully for the work. With the RAC program back on track, the CMS will resume provider outreach activities over the next few months.

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**MEDICAL ACTION**

**Pristiq**

Extended-Release Tablets

**BRIEF SUMMARY** See package insert for full prescribing information. For further product information and patient brochures, visit www.pristiq.com or call our medical information department toll-free at 1-800-458-3555.

**INDICATIONS AND USES** A selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), Pristiq is indicated for the treatment of patients with major depressive disorder (MDD) in adults 18 years and older.

**CONTRAINDICATIONS**- Hypersensitivity- Cerebrovascular accident, severe hypertension, sustained hypotension, syncope, angina pectoris, infarction, increased intracranial pressure, and other conditions associated with cerebrovascular insufficiency- Hypersensitivity to desvenlafaxine succinate or prazosin hydrochloride, any component of the formulation.

**WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS**- Clinical Worsening and Suicide Risk- There is an increased risk of suicidal thinking and behavior in children, adolescents, and young adults treated with antidepressant drugs for major depression and other mood disorders, as well as in adults treated for anxiety disorders, over 65 years of age, and in other adult subpopulations with known increased risk (e.g., with a history of mania, seizure, or head trauma). The risk of suicidal thinking or behavior is thought to be particularly prominent early during antidepressant treatment, especially during the first few months. The risk also may increase at times of dose changes, either increases or decreases.

**ADVERSE REACTIONS** Clinical Studies Experience: The most commonly observed adverse reactions associated with treatment with Pristiq are nausea, headache, nervousness, insomnia, abnormal dreams, blushing, cardiovascular symptoms (e.g., palpitations, tachycardia), blood pressure increased, somnolence, decreased appetite, anxiety, and specific male sexual function disorders.

**DOSE AND ADMINISTRATION** Dosage and Administration (2.5) in the full prescribing information.

**HOW SUPPLIED** Tablets- Desvenlafaxine succinate (active ingredient) is a white to off-white, oval-shaped, film-coated tablet, marked "25" imprinted on one side and "Pristiq" on the other side.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION** Please refer to the following sections: Dosage and Administration (2.5), Cautions Concerning the Use of Antidepressants (2.6), Contraindications (2.7), Obstetric/Acute Postpartum Use (2.8), Pediatrics (6.1), Geriatric Use (6.7), Clinical Worsening and Suicide Risk (6.14), Adverse Reactions (6.2), Use in Specific Populations (8), Overdosage (10), and Information for Patients (11).

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