Isotretinoin Rx Plan Delayed

BY TIMOTHY F. KIRK
Sacramento Bureau

The implementation of the iPLEDGE program for isotretinoin prescribing has been delayed by 1 month for pharmacies and by 2 months for physicians and patients, the Food and Drug Administration announced last month. The program, which will register by Dec. 30 to receive new supplies of isotretinoin or see supplies pulled back by the manufacturers starting Dec. 31, will be dispensed by pharmacies through February 2006.

The delay of iPLEDGE was necessary largely because not enough pharmacies had signed up yet, sources said in an interview.

Implementation of the iPLEDGE program was only publicly announced by FDA in August (Family Practice News, Sept. 15, 2005, p. 8).

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By mid-October, only about 15,000 of 55,000 retail pharmacies in the United States had registered with Covance Inc., the company running the iPLEDGE registration system, according to Douglas Hoey, R.Ph., a senior vice president with the North Pacific Pediatric Society.

By mid-November, 15,000 of 55,000 retail pharmacies had not yet registered with Covance, said Dr. Robert Sidbury, M.D., Ph.D., chair of dermatology at the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn.

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The number of isotretinoin prescriptions dropped significantly in the year after the implementation of the SMART program.

Alan Shalita, M.D., said he was somewhat relieved to learn of the program implementation delay, adding that he was not worried about being able to prescribe isotretinoin when the time came. He had registered with the iPLEDGE program soon after it came online and by November had still not received his patient materials from the program.

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