Isotretinoin Rx Plan Delayed

BY TIMOTHY F. KIRN
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 delay, which became official by Dec. 30 to receive new supplies of isotretinoin or see supplies pulled back by the manufacturers starting Dec. 31, means that physicians now must register by March 1, 2006, for a prescription written by that date.

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).

“We needed time to iron things out—it’s a very complicated task,” said a source at FDA. “We’ve all been having daily meetings on this for months.”

By mid-October, only about 15,000 of 55,000 registered 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 National Community Pharmacists Association.

“Implementation of the SMART program was delayed by 1 month for pharmacies and by 2 months for physicians and patients, the Food and Drug Administration announced last month,” said Dr. Shalita.

The number of isotretinoin prescribers 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.

“I think it was an intelligent move to put implementation off,” said Dr. Shalita, chair of dermatology at the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn.

Balance Efficacy and Tolerability When Selecting Topical Retinoids for Acne

BY ROBERT FINN
San Francisco Bureau

BALAINE, Wash. — Topical retinoids can be highly effective treatments for acne; however, they come in a bewilderingly wide variety of strengths and formulations. Clinicians should consider effectiveness, tolerability, and the type of vehicle that would be best for an individual patient in making the choice, Robert Sidbury, M.D., said at a conference sponsored by the North Pacific Pediatric Society.

Physicians must choose among adapalene (Differin) 0.1%, which comes formulated as a gel, a cream, a solution, and as pledgets; tretinoin (Retin-A), which comes in four strengths between 0.01% and 0.1% as a cream and 0.05% and 0.025% as a gel; tretinoin micro (Retin-A Micro), which comes in 0.04% and 0.1% strengths; and tazarotene (Tazorac), which comes as a gel and as a cream in 0.05% and 0.1% strengths.

Adapalene is at the top of the tolerability list, said Dr. Sidbury of the University of Washington in Seattle. Tretinoin micro comes next, followed by tazarotene. Tazarotene is the least tolerable of the retinoids.

Unfortunately, the least tolerable topical retinoid is the most effective, and the most tolerable is the least effective. Those patients who are able to tolerate tazarotene are likely to find that it works better for them than do the alternatives.

Retinoids that are formulated in creams tend to be better tolerated—but less effective in equal strengths—than those formulated in gels, Dr. Sidbury said.

There are things patients can do and things physicians can do to optimize success with topical retinoids, he said. Although all these products are intended to do and things physicians can do to optimize success with topical retinoids, he said. Although all these products are intended to

Dr. Shalita.

Hope for Physical Deformities

FRESH START SURGICAL GIFTS is offering a patient outreach program to inform U.S. families of children with physical deformities about free reconstructive plastic surgery and related medical services that are available from the nonprofit group.

The program includes a video news release and a CD with background information. For more information about the organization, visit www.freshstart.org. To obtain the outreach materials, contact the organization by calling 888-551-1003.