the Rx DBL report

Issue #42, January 2007

An Official Accompaniment to the Alberta Health and Wellness Drug Benefit List (AHWDBL)

The Expert Committee on Drug Evaluation and Therapeutics (ECDET)

produced by Alberta Blue Cross

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Highlights of:

ABC 81171 (01/2007)

Highlights of Products Added

■ **AVALIDE** (irbesartan/hydrochlorothiazide) (SAV), **300 mg/25 mg** tablets are a line extension of the currently listed Avalide product line. This product provides a rational titration alternative for hypertensive patients requiring optimal blood pressure control with fixed dose combinations of irbesartan and hydrochlorothiazide. Further, the availability of this product eliminated the need to add 12.5 mg hydrochlorothiazide to the currently listed Avalide 300/12.5 mg strength when required. Accordingly, this product was recommended for listing.

■ **LINESSA** (desogestrel/ethinyl estradiol) (ORG), **21 and 28 Day** packages are indicated for the prevention of pregnancy. Although offering only a slight cost savings over other oral contraceptives containing desogestrel, Linessa has a lower dose of estrogen and reported improvements in cycle control. Hence, the Committee recommended the addition of Linessa.

■ **NOVO-BETHAHISTINE** (bethahistine) (NOP) **16 mg** was added to the *AHWDBL* on November 1, 2006 as interchangeable with Serc. This product offers greater than 30% savings over the innovator and is expected to offer savings of approximately $260,000 to the government-sponsored programs in the first year of listing.

■ **PARIET** (rabeprazole sodium) (JOI) **20 mg** tablets are a line extension of the currently listed Pariet product line. Pariet is a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) that is indicated in the treatment of conditions where a reduction of gastric acid secretion is required. This product is priced equivalent to 2 x Pariet 10mg and offers a significant cost advantage over other currently listed PPIs. Accordingly it was recommended that this product be added to the *AHWDBL*.

■ **SANDOZ FELODIPINE** (felodipine) (SDZ) **5 mg and 10 mg** was added to the *AHWDBL* on November 1, 2006 in an interchangeable grouping with Plendil and Renedil. This product offers greater than 30% savings over the innovator and is expected to offer approximately $2,900,000 in savings to the government-sponsored programs in the first year of listing.

Change in Benefit Status of Topical Antibiotic, EENT Antibiotic Products and Stemgen

Comprehensive reviews of clinical evidence to support the efficacy of topical and EENT antibiotic products were undertaken by the Sub-Committee on the Review of Benefit Status of Products, Classes and Categories on the *AHWDBL*. Following review of the information obtained in the literature, as well as input from the manufacturers and other stakeholders, the Expert Committee recommended a change in the benefit status of select topical and EENT antibiotic products effective January 1, 2007. Please refer to the *AHWDBL* for the listing status of such agents.

In addition, a review of utilization of Stemgen (ancestim) was performed. It was noted that there was no utilization for this product during the time period ranging from 2002 to 2005. Consultations with the manufacturer and other stakeholders did not provide any additional information to merit the continued listing of this product on the *AHWDBL*. Accordingly, it was recommended that this product be delisted effective January 1, 2007.

Highlights of Products Added via Special Authorization

- **APO-MIDODRINE** (midodrine hydrochloride) (APX) **2.5 mg and 5 mg** was added to the *AHWDBL* on January 1, 2007 in an interchangeable grouping with Amatine. This product has been recommended for addition via Special Authorization with the following criteria for coverage: "For the treatment of neurogenic types of idiopathic hypotension where the response to standard therapy is inadequate. Special Authorization may be granted for 24 months."

- **DURAGESIC** (fentanyl) (JOI) **12 mcg/hr** transdermal patches have been recommended for listing on the *AHWDBL* via special authorization for the treatment of persistent, severe chronic pain. The Committee indicated that this product may offer a therapeutic advantage when titrating fentanyl dosage. It should be noted that this product is listed as an unrestricted benefit for the Palliative Care Drug Benefit program. Please refer to the *AHWDBL* for a complete listing of special authorization criteria.

Highlights of Products Added to MS Drug Coverage Program

- **REBIF** (interferon beta-1A) (SRO), **8.8 mcg/0.2 mL & 22.0 mcg/0.5 mL** Initiation Pack has been recommended for listing via the MS Drug Coverage Program on the *AHWDBL*. The Committee indicated that the introduction of the Rebif Initiation Pack would replace the use of the spacer devices during dosage titration and thereby increase patient convenience, decrease drug wastage and potentially decrease drug program costs. Accordingly, the Committee recommended that this product be listed.

Highlights of Products Not Added

- **ALTACE** (ramipril) (SAV) **15 mg** capsules-The Committee determined there currently is no need for a 15 mg capsule on the AHWDBL given available utilization data and that a 15 mg daily dose may be achieved using a combination of the other listed strengths.

- **BIPHENTIN** (methylphenidate hydrochloride) (PUR), **10 mg, 15 mg, 20 mg, 30 mg, 40 mg, 50 mg and 60 mg** are controlled-release capsules that are indicated in the treatment of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The Committee indicated that the available evidence did not support that Biphentin offered a therapeutic advantage over other currently listed alternatives. Accordingly, the Committee recommended that this product should not be added.