05 June 2015
EMA/385522/2015
EMEA/H/A-30/1380

Questions and answers on Ikorel, Dancor and associated names (nicorandil, 10 and 20 mg tablets)

Outcome of a procedure under Article 30 of Directive 2001/83/EC

On 26 March 2015, the European Medicines Agency completed a review of Ikorel and Dancor. The Agency's Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) concluded that there is a need to harmonise the prescribing information for these medicines in the European Union (EU).

What are Ikorel and Dancor?

Ikorel and Dancor are medicines used to treat symptoms of angina pectoris (pain in the chest due to problems with the blood flow to the heart) in adult patients for whom treatment with medicines known as beta-blockers and/or calcium antagonists is not sufficiently effective, not indicated or not tolerated.

Ikorel and Dancor contain the active substance nicorandil, which works by relaxing the muscles in the walls of the blood vessels that supply the heart, thereby improving blood flow to the heart muscle and relieving the symptoms of angina.

Ikorel and Dancor are marketed in the following EU Member States: Austria, Denmark, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. They are also available in the EU under other trade names: Adancor, Angicor and Nicorandil Zentiva.

The companies that market these medicines are Sanofi-Aventis and Merck KGaA.

Why were Ikorel and Dancor reviewed?

Ikorel and Dancor have been authorised in the EU via national procedures. This has led to divergences across Member States in the way the medicines can be used, as seen in the differences in the summaries of product characteristics (SmPCs), labelling and package leaflets in the countries where the medicines are marketed.

Ikorel and Dancor were identified as needing harmonisation by the Co-ordination Group for Mutual Recognition and Decentralised Procedures – Human (CMDh).

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On 12 December 2013, the European Commission referred the matter to the CHMP in order to harmonise the marketing authorisations for Ikorel and Dancor in the EU.

What are the conclusions of the CHMP?

The CHMP, in the light of the data submitted and the scientific discussion within the Committee, was of the opinion that the SmPCs, labelling and package leaflets should be harmonised across the EU.

The areas harmonised include:

4.1 Therapeutic indication

The CHMP agreed that Ikorel and Dancor should only be used as a second-line option to treat the symptoms of angina, when patients do not sufficiently respond to, do not tolerate or should not take medicines such as beta-blockers and/or calcium antagonists.

Ikorel and Dancor should no longer be used to prevent heart problems, such as a heart attack, in patients with stable coronary heart disease (heart disease caused by the obstruction of the blood vessels that supply the heart muscle), because the available clinical data do not support this indication.

4.2 Posology and method of administration

Having harmonised the indications, the CHMP also harmonised the recommendations on how to use Ikorel and Dancor. The usual starting dose is 10 mg taken twice a day, preferably in the morning and in the evening. In patients particularly predisposed to headaches, the starting dose can be lowered to 5 mg twice a day. Depending on the patient's response and tolerance to treatment, the dose can be increased up to a maximum of 40 mg twice a day.

4.3 Contraindications

The CHMP agreed that Ikorel and Dancor must not be used in:

- Patients with known hypersensitivity (allergy) to nicorandil or to any of the other ingredients;
- Patients with shock, severe hypotension (low blood pressure), or heart problems such as 'left ventricular dysfunction with low filling pressure' or 'cardiac decompensation';
- Patients taking medicines known as 'phosphodiesterase 5 inhibitors' and/or 'soluble guanylate cyclase stimulators', since this can lead to a serious drop in blood pressure;
- Patients suffering from hypovolaemia (low blood volume);
- Patients with a build-up of fluids in the lungs (acute pulmonary oedema).

4.4 Special warnings and precautions for use

Gastrointestinal ulcers and ulcers on the skin and some internal (mucosal) surfaces have been reported in patients taking Ikorel or Dancor. These ulcers are difficult to treat and usually resolve only when treatment with Ikorel or Dancor is stopped. If ulcers develop, Ikorel or Dancor should be permanently discontinued.

Ikorel and Dancor should be used with caution in patients taking the following medicines:

- Aspirin or medicines called NSAIDs (non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs), because these patients are at higher risk of developing complications of ulcers, such as bleeding in the stomach or gut;
- Medicines that could increase the levels of potassium in the blood, especially in patients with reduced kidney function;

- Medicines that have a blood pressure-lowering effect.

Additionally, Ikorel and Dancor should be used with caution in patients lacking an enzyme called glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase, and in patients with heart failure class III or IV (heart disease that severely limits or makes physical activity not possible without discomfort).

Other changes

The CHMP also harmonised other sections of the SmPC including sections 4.5 (interactions with other medicinal products), 4.8 (undesirable effects) and 5.1 (pharmacodynamic properties). The labelling and package leaflet were also revised in line with the changes to the SmPC.

The amended information to doctors and patients is available here.

The European Commission issued an EU-wide legally binding decision to implement these changes on 05 June 2015.