European Medicines Agency

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Questions and answers on the updated recommendations for Fabrazyme treatment

The European Medicines Agency has been informed by Genzyme that the supply shortage of Fabrazyme is more serious than was previously thought. Because of this, the Agency has reviewed the treatment recommendations made in June 2009 on which patients should receive Fabrazyme as a priority during the shortage of this medicine, which is expected to continue until the end of 2009. The Agency is now recommending that not only female adults but also male adults should receive a reduced dose of Fabrazyme. Children and adolescents should continue to receive Fabrazyme treatment at full dose, as previously recommended.

What is Fabrazyme?

Fabrazyme is used in patients with Fabry disease, a rare, inherited, life-threatening disease in which patients do not have enough of an enzyme called alpha-galactosidase A. This enzyme is involved in the breakdown of fatty substances in the body. If the enzyme is not present, fatty substances cannot be broken down and they build up in the body's cells, such as kidney cells. Fabrazyme contains agalsidase beta, which is a copy of the natural enzyme.

The replacement enzyme is made by a method known as 'recombinant DNA technology': it is made by cells that have received genes (DNA) that makes them able to produce the enzyme.

Fabrazyme has been authorised in the European Union (EU) since August 2001, and it is marketed in all EU Member States.

What is the problem with Fabrazyme?

The shortage of Fabrazyme is happening because of a contamination problem in a factory in Allston Landing in the United States of America, where the active substance for Fabrazyme is made. In June 2009 Genzyme, the company that makes Fabrazyme, had to stop production of new batches of Fabrazyme for an extended period of time. As a result of this supply shortage, the company, in agreement with the Agency, recommended some temporary changes to the way Fabrazyme was prescribed and used.

The manufacture of Fabrazyme has now started again, but the amount of Fabrazyme produced has been lower than expected, leading to an availability of only around 30% of the amount of medicine needed for the period from October 2009 to the end of the year. As a result, the recommendations on the use of Fabrazyme made in June have now been revised. These changes should be implemented immediately.

What are the recommendations while the shortage is ongoing?

- Priority is given to children and adolescents, who should continue to receive Fabrazyme as one infusion every two weeks.
- Adult male and female patients may receive Fabrazyme at a reduced dose of 0.3 mg per kilogram body weight every two weeks.

It is essential that all adults be closely monitored while they are receiving reduced doses of Fabrazyme. Doctors should carry out a full medical examination every two months, to make sure that

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the disease is not getting worse. If this happens, the dose should be increased back to the full dose of 1 mg/kg.

Reporting of side effects will continue as normal, with doctors recording the batch numbers of the medicines in each patient's records. These are temporary recommendations and do not change the currently approved product information for these medicines.

These changes will apply until end of 2009 when the shortage is expected to be resolved.

What are the recommendations for prescribers?

- Doctors who look after patients with Fabry disease should be aware of the shortage, and should consider which patients should be switched to the reduced dose.

What are the recommendations for patients?

- There are no consequences for patients under the age of 18 years with Fabry disease.
- Adult patients with Fabry disease should be contacted by their doctor to discuss their treatment options. While the shortage of Fabrazyme is ongoing, they may be treated at the same frequency (every two weeks) but with a reduced dose.
- Patients who have any questions should speak to their doctor or pharmacist.

What will happen next?

Genzyme is contacting all doctors who prescribe Fabrazyme, to tell them how to select the patients who need a reduced dose, according to the new recommendations. Genzyme has informed the Agency that these measures will have no impact on the supply of the medicines for ongoing clinical trials.

What is happening with Cerezyme?

The shortage of Cerezyme, another medicine made by Genzyme at the same factory, is also still ongoing. The recommendations made in August 2009 for Cerezyme remain unchanged, stating that only patients at greatest need of treatment should receive Cerezyme but at a reduced dosage[1].

The European Medicines Agency will communicate again if any new information becomes available.

[1] More information on these recommendations can be found here: http://www.emea.europa.eu/humandocs/PDFs/EPAR/Cerezyme/51076609en.pdf