Department of Health & Social Care

NHS

Supply Disruption Alert

SDA/2020/004 Issue date: 16 April 2020

Neuromuscular blocking agents: atracurium, cisatracurium and rocuronium

Summary

- There are now limited supplies of atracurium injection (all strengths) and cisatracurium injection (all strengths) remaining in the system due to the recent increase in demand.
- Once supplies of atracurium and cisatracurium have been exhausted locally over the coming days, Trusts will need to switch to the alternative clinical agent rocuronium, which remains available at present.
- Where patients are being intubated, Trusts should use suxamethonium (not rocuronium) as a first choice, unless there are contraindications.
- To ensure equitable supply nationally, existing supplies will now be managed centrally working closely with the regional procurement leads in England and national procurement leads in the Devolved Administrations.
- All remaining stock of atracurium and rocuronium injection in system will be allocated to Trusts based on recent modelling data which takes account of current stockholding and ICU bed occupancy.
- Stocks of cisatracurium in the supply chain are critically low and restock is not expected in the near future. Remaining stock is not at sufficient quantities to be centrally managed by allocations.
- NHSE&I with DHSC are working with suppliers and specialist importers of these agents to secure further supplies for the UK. We are also working with suppliers of other neuromuscular blocking agents to assess their supply position.
- Further management advice will be issued in the coming weeks regarding the ongoing supply management for neuromuscular blocking agents.

Action

Regional and National Procurement leads should:

- inform trusts and health boards of their stock allocations which were shared on 14 April 2020. Trusts will be allocated approximately 10-14 days' supply of atracurium and rocuronium injection combined;
- identify trusts who have stock holding beyond actual demand and work with Trusts to re-distribute this stock across their region;
- support local stock sharing between Trusts where appropriate; and
- Inform trusts that further advice will be shared in the coming weeks regarding ongoing supply management for Neuromuscular blocking agents.

Pharmacy procurement and clinical teams should:

- only purchase up to the amount of stock that has been allocated to their Trust as directed by their regional procurement lead;
- work with their Medicines Safety Officer to consider how they will safely manage this stock within their trust;
- refer to the guidance issued by the Royal College of Anaesthetists, Association of Anaesthetists, Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine, Intensive Care Society and UK Clinical Pharmacy Association to help

support the local switching between neuromuscular blocking agents: https://icmanaesthesiacovid-19.org/drug-demand-supply-guidance;
- consider local management options to decrease waste locally, for example by only drawing up what will be used. Further guidance about this can be found on the SPS website which needs a login to access: https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/minimising-wastage-of-critical-medicines-during-covid-19/ ; and
- contact their regional procurement lead if their allocation will be insufficient to last for the next two weeks

Deadlines for actions

Actions underway: on receipt of this alert.
Actions complete: as soon as possible.

Supporting Information

- Due to the use of various formulations and presentations of ICU that may be used during the Covid-19 outbreak, a poster has been created to highlight to clinical staff the importance of reading the product label. The poster can be found by following the attached link https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/drug-packaging-and-labelling-during-covid-19-poster-and-screensaver-for-teams/

Distribution

Trusts (NHS boards in Scotland and Wales)

CAS and SABS (NI) liaison officers for onward distribution to all relevant staff including:

- A&E consultants
- A&E departments
- A&E directors
- A&E nurses
- Adult intensive care units
- Anaesthesia, directors of
- Anaesthetic medical staff
- Anaesthetic nursing staff
- Anaesthetists
- Cardiologists
- Cardiology departments
- Cardiology nurses
- Cardiology, directors of
- Cardiothoracic departments
- Cardiothoracic surgeons
- Cardiothoracic surgery directors
- Chief pharmacists
- Clinical governance leads
- Clinical Procurement Specialists
- District nurses
- Hospital at home units
- Hospital pharmacies
- Hospital pharmacists
- Immunologists
- Intensive care medical staff/paediatrics
- Intensive care nursing staff (adult)
- Intensive care nursing staff (paediatric)
- Intensive care units
- Intensive care, directors of
- IV nurse specialists
- Intensive care, directors of
- Obstetricians
- Obstetrics and gynaecology departments
- Obstetrics and gynaecology directors
- Obstetrics departments
- Obstetrics nurses
- Paediatric intensive care units
- Paediatric medicine, directors of
- Palliative care teams
- Pharmaceutical advisors
- Pharmacists
- Purchasing managers
- Theatre managers
- Theatre nurses

Independent distribution

Establishments registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (England only

- Hospitals in the independent sector
- Independent treatment centres
- Nursing agencies
- Private medical practitioners

Enquiries

England

Enquiries from NHS Trusts in England should in the first instance be directed to you trust pharmacy team who will escalate issues to the Regional Pharmacy Procurement Specialist and national teams if required.

REGION	Full Name	Email
East Midlands	Andi Swain	andi.swain@nhs.net
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Scotland
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All other organisations should send enquiries about this notice to the DHSC Supply Resilience Team, quoting reference number **SDA/2020/004**

Email: supplyresiliencemd@dhsc.gov.uk