Department of Health & Social Care

NHS

Supply Disruption Alert: Update

SDA/2020/004(R)(U) Issue Date: 22 May 2020

Neuromuscular blocking agents: atracurium, cisatracurium and rocuronium

Summary

This supply disruption alert update supersedes the update (SDA/2020/004(R)) issued on 16th April 2020 and advises on the following.

- On the 16th April a supply disruption alert was issued for neuromuscular blocking agents (NMBAs) which advised that there were limited supplies of atracurium injection (all strengths) and cisatracurium injection (all strengths) remaining in the system due to the recent increase in demand. Trusts were advised that once supplies of atracurium and cisatracurium had been exhausted, they would need to switch to the alternative clinical agents rocuronium or pancuronium, which remained available. To preserve supplies of rocuronium, Trusts were previously advised that suxamethonium should be used to facilitate tracheal intubation as part of a rapid sequence induction.
- **The supply position on rocuronium has now substantially improved.** Therefore, Trusts can now use rocuronium as a first-choice neuromuscular blocking agent (NMBA) in all scenarios as they choose, unless there is a contraindication.
- Trusts should now:
    1. Use rocuronium for patients who are undergoing tracheal intubation (both rapid sequence induction and routine induction) in both critical care and perioperative services; and
    2. Use rocuronium for maintenance of neuromuscular blockade both in critical care and perioperative services.
- **Supplies of atracurium and cisatracurium via the wholesalers remain severely limited.** To ensure equitable distribution any supplies will be managed and allocated centrally. This will be achieved by working closely with the regional pharmacy procurement specialists in England and national procurement leads in the Devolved Administrations.

Action

Critical Care Clinical Leads and Departments of Anaesthesia should:

- Use rocuronium for intubation and use rocuronium for maintenance of neuromuscular blockade when clinically indicated; and
- Ensure they are not stockpiling NMBAs.

Deadlines for actions
Action 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

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Send enquiries about this notice to the DHSC Supply Resilience Team, quoting reference number SDA/2020/004 (R) (U) by email to: supplyresiliencemd@dhsc.gov.uk

Addressees may take copies for distribution within their own organisations