

# Shortage of Phenzelzine (Nardil<sup>®</sup>) 15mg tablets

Updated 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019

## Description of product affected

- Phenzelzine is a monoamine-oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) licensed for the treatment of depression.<sup>1</sup> It has been found to be effective in patients clinically characterised as 'atypical', 'non endogenous', 'neurotic' or where treatment with other antidepressants has failed.
- NICE supports the use of phenzelzine as an antidepressant and as an option in the treatment of social anxiety disorder.<sup>2,3</sup> Phenzelzine is also used in patients with mixed depression and generalised anxiety disorder, panic disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>4</sup>
- The recommended starting dose is 15mg three times daily which can be increased to four times a day if necessary.<sup>5</sup> Doses of up to 30mg three times a day can be used in hospitalised patients. Once a satisfactory response has been achieved the dose can be reduced gradually to the lowest suitable maintenance dose.
- Phenzelzine may be associated with withdrawal effects if stopped suddenly. Although these are usually mild and self-limiting for some patients, withdrawal effects may be severe. It is advised that the dose should be reduced gradually over at least 4 weeks or longer if withdrawal symptoms emerge. Withdrawal over 6 months is recommended when patients have been taking it as a long-term treatment.
- When switching to an alternative antidepressant, it is advised to leave a 14-day washout period between stopping the phenzelzine and initiating the new treatment.<sup>4,6</sup>

## Background

- Kyowa Kirin are the sole supplier of phenzelzine tablets in the UK. They will be out of stock for a period of at least three months from the beginning of August until end of October 2019.
- At present it seems possible to import supplies of unlicensed phenzelzine tablets whilst there is no stock available in the UK.

## Alternative agents and management options

- Phenzelzine tends to only be used in difficult to treat patients and many of these have been stabilised on this treatment for a long time.
- Given the difficulties in withdrawing treatment and initiating new treatments in patients stabilised on phenzelzine it would seem advisable to maintain them on this treatment using imported supplies if necessary, which would need to be treated as an unlicensed medicine in line with local clinical governance procedures.

## Urgent Action

### For GP practices:

- [GP practices should urgently identify patients prescribed phenzelzine 15mg tablets \(including the brand Nardil\)](#) to ensure patients have sufficient stock of their medication to last during the shortage period.

- Where patients do not have sufficient supplies, practices should liaise with pharmacies directly to ascertain their stock levels as different pharmacies use a range of wholesalers.
- Where an imported product is required to maintain the patients supply of phenelzine 15mg tablets, the prescription should be written in a time frame to allow the pharmacy to order the stock from the importing company before the patient runs out of medication.
- **Ordering of imports may take much longer than the normal ordering process.**

**Phenelzine imports may be ordered if a pharmacy has an account with the importer, Clinigen (formerly IDIS) via telephone 01932 824100.**

- Please note that **Clinigen hold no stock** and have to import stock on demand for patients on a named basis.
  - The generic Phenelzine product takes an **estimated 12 working days to order.**
  - The branded Nardil product takes as **estimated 16 working days to order.**
- Different pharmacies use different wholesalers, and you should support the patient to find a pharmacy that can order the imported product via Clinigen.
  - An URGENT referral should be made to the patient's mental health specialist for advice **ONLY IF** imported phenelzine cannot be obtained within a sufficient timeframe.
  - Counsel the patient and their carers as appropriate about any change to their medication, including where an imported brand may be required, BEFORE any change is made.

#### **For pharmacies:**

- Support by checking your current stock levels of these products and informing your local practices.
- Support by checking your pharmacy has an account with Clinigen (formerly IDIS) in preparation for when an order needs to be placed and keep up to date with the estimated delivery timescales with Clinigen directly.
- Support GPs in counselling patients regarding any change to their medication, including any changes in packaging or appearance of tablets, which may be unusual to a patient.

#### **References**

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