Methotrexate and Folic Acid Review

Summary

- Methotrexate is usually prescribed as a once a week treatment. Folic acid should be routinely co-prescribed with methotrexate in order to reduce adverse effects and toxicity, mainly gastrointestinal and haematological toxicity, thus improving continuation of therapy and compliance.
- Folic acid is usually taken on a 'non-methotrexate' day.
- All patients on methotrexate should normally be started on folic acid at a dose of at least 5mg per week (do not give on methotrexate day).
- A typical dose is folic acid 5mg once each week, taken two to three days after methotrexate dose. Sometimes the dose/frequency of folic acid is increased and occasionally folinic acid is used instead.

Benefits of this review

- Ensuring an appropriate dose of folic acid is taken as advised will minimise the risk of adverse drug reactions due to the methotrexate and ensure that the effect of the methotrexate is not limited by taking folic acid on the same day.

Additional advice/information for the patient

The difference between methotrexate and folic acid should be explained to them and the visual differences between the two tablets, including distinguishing features should be highlighted – ensure this is mentioned at point of dispensing.

Guidance for Action

Identify patients prescribed methotrexate and split into groups as follows and in all cases ensure there is local shared care guidance (SCG) in place and adhered to: [http://www.cambsphn.nhs.uk/CJPG/SharedCareGuidance.aspx](http://www.cambsphn.nhs.uk/CJPG/SharedCareGuidance.aspx)

1. Patients with methotrexate on repeat list but NO folic acid prescribed.
2. Patients with both methotrexate and folic acid on their repeat list.

**Group 1**

- Highlight these patients to the prescriber.
- If there is a folic acid dose and frequency recorded in a hospital document alert the prescriber to the date of this letter and the dose specified.

**Group 2**

- Ensure the dose and frequency of folic acid is prescribed as per last hospital letter.
- If not specified on the dose, add the following: “Do not take folic acid on the same day as your methotrexate tablets”.