HPRA
An tÚdarás Rialála Táirgí Sláinte
Health Products Regulatory Authority

Epoetins: New Warnings on Severe Cutaneous Adverse Reactions (SCARs)

The Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) recently completed a detailed analysis of severe cutaneous adverse reactions (SCARs) associated with epoetin-containing medicines. This review was initiated following post-marketing reports of SCARs including Stevens - Johnson syndrome (SJS) and Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN) with some epoetins. The PRAC concluded that SCARs, including SJS and TEN, are considered a class effect for all epoetins and the product information for these medicines will be updated accordingly.

A Direct Healthcare Professional Communication (DHPC) was circulated to relevant healthcare professionals by the marketing authorisation holders (MAHs) for epoetin-containing medicines detailing the risk of SCARs in association with these medicines.

Human endogenous erythropoietin (EPO) is a growth factor produced primarily by the kidney in response to hypoxia and interacts with erythroid progenitor cells to increase red blood cell (RBC) production. There are several forms of synthetic erythropoietin licensed in Ireland (i.e. darbepoetin alfa, epoetin alfa, epoetin beta, epoetin theta, epoetin zeta and methoxy polyethylene glycol-epoetin beta) under various brand names for specified anaemias e.g. of renal failure or malignancy, or in the case of certain epoetins, for use before autologous blood donation, or for high-risk patients prior to specific surgeries.

Advice for Healthcare Professionals

- Severe cutaneous adverse reactions (SCARs), some life-threatening or fatal, including cases of Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS) and Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN) have been reported in patients treated with epoetins.
- Severe cutaneous adverse reactions are considered to be a very rare class effect of all epoetins.
- The reactions have been more severe with long-acting epoetins.
- Patients should be monitored and advised of the signs and symptoms of severe skin reactions when starting treatment with an epoetin product.
- Patients should be instructed to contact their doctor immediately and stop epoetin treatment if they develop:
  - widespread rash with reddening and blistering of the skin and oral mucosa, eyes, nose, throat, or genital area, which follow flu-like symptoms including fever, tiredness, muscle and joint pain.
- Patients who experience severe cutaneous adverse reactions considered to be related to the use of an epoetin should never be re-exposed to an epoetin.

Key Message

- Severe cutaneous adverse reactions (SCARs) are considered to be a class effect of all epoetins.
- When starting treatment, patients should be closely monitored and advised of the signs and symptoms of severe skin reactions (detailed above).
- Patient who develop these signs and symptoms should be instructed to contact their doctor immediately and stop epoetin treatment.

Epoetin-containing medicinal products include Abseamed, Aranesp, Binocrit, Biopoin, Eporatio, Epoetin alfa Hexal, Eprex, Mircera, NeoRecormon, Retacrit, and Silapo. Further details are available on www.hpra.ie or www.ema.europa.eu.