

## Direct Healthcare Professional Communication

July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### **CHAMPIX (varenicline) - lots to be recalled due to presence of impurity N-nitroso-varenicline above the Pfizer acceptable daily intake limit**

Dear Healthcare Professional,

Pfizer, in agreement with the European Medicines Agency and Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) would like to inform you of the following:

#### **Summary**

- **Lots of CHAMPIX batches (varenicline) that were found to contain levels of N-nitroso-varenicline above Pfizer's acceptable level of daily intake are being recalled. As a precaution, Pfizer is pausing distribution of the medicine pending further testing.**
- **No product lots in the Irish market are being recalled at this time.**
- **Based on the available data, there is no immediate risk to patients taking this medication.**
- **While EU authorities continue to assess the data, healthcare professionals should, as a precaution, not start new patients on CHAMPIX.**
- **The recall and pause in distribution will result in shortages of CHAMPIX.**
- **For patients who are already on CHAMPIX, it may not be possible to complete treatment and healthcare professionals may consider switching treatment to an alternative.**
- **Alternatives will vary from market to market but may include nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and bupropion.**
- **Healthcare professionals should also take into account the need to consider dose tapering, as the summary of product characteristics (SmPC) states that "At the end of treatment, discontinuation of CHAMPIX was associated with an increase in irritability, urge to smoke, depression, and/or insomnia in up to 3% of patients."**
- **Healthcare providers should advise patients undergoing treatment not to discontinue CHAMPIX without consulting them, and to discuss any questions or concerns with their healthcare provider if needed.**

### ***Background on the safety concern***

CHAMPIX (varenicline) is indicated for smoking cessation in adults.

Pfizer tested CHAMPIX product lots for the presence of the CHAMPIX-derived nitrosamine, N-nitroso-varenicline. Test results indicated levels of N-nitroso-varenicline in certain lots exceeded the Pfizer product-specific acceptable daily intake (ADI) level.

N-nitroso-varenicline is a nitrosamine. Nitrosamines are classified as probable human carcinogens (substances that could cause cancer). Nitrosamines can be found at very low levels in water and foods, including cured and grilled meats, dairy products and vegetables. Nitrosamine impurities may increase the risk of cancer if people are exposed to them above acceptable levels over long periods of time. As a precaution, Pfizer is recalling product lots above the Pfizer derived ADI and pausing distribution of CHAMPIX, pending further testing.

No product lots in the Irish market are being recalled at this time.

This nitrosamine finding is not associated with any change in CHAMPIX manufacturing.

Pfizer and the EMA are working together to assess information on this issue and are monitoring the situation closely, including any disruptions to the European market.

The expected benefits of CHAMPIX, intended to help patients quit smoking and with a limited use of 12 to 24 weeks, outweigh the low potential risks posed by temporary N-nitroso-varenicline exposure from CHAMPIX. CHAMPIX has a safety profile that has been established through the clinical development program and confirmed by data from over 15 years of marketing.

### ***Call for reporting***

Healthcare professionals are reminded to continue to report suspected adverse reactions associated with CHAMPIX in accordance with the National spontaneous reporting system. Healthcare professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse reactions.

You can assist us with monitoring the safety of CHAMPIX (varenicline) by reporting suspected adverse reactions. Healthcare professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse reactions via HPRC Pharmacovigilance, website [www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie).

Suspected adverse drug reactions may also be reported to Pfizer Medical Information on 1800 633 363.

### ***Company contact point***

For more information about CHAMPIX (varenicline), please contact Pfizer Medical Information at Pfizer Limited, Walton Oaks, Dorking Road, Tadworth, Surrey, KT20 7NS or Tel: 1800 633 363 and ask for Medical Information.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr. Declan O'Callaghan**

**Medical Director**