

Confusion between Reminyl and Amaryl causes medication errors

Janssen-Ortho and Aventis Pharma have issued 'Dear Health Care Professional' and 'Dear Pharmacist' letters to advise that they have received reports of medication errors with Reminyl [galantamine] and Amaryl [glimepiride], due to confusion caused by the similarity of their brandnames.^{1,2} They have also issued a Public Advisory in consultation with Health Canada.³

A total of 36 spontaneous reports originating in the US have been received; 12 have been confirmed.^{1,2,3} The errors involve incorrect writing, interpretation, labelling or filling of prescriptions due to confusion between the names Reminyl and Amaryl, and include the incorrect dispensing of Amaryl when Reminyl was prescribed. As a consequence, various adverse events have occurred, including severe hypoglycaemia, and there have been two reports of death.

The companies advise healthcare professionals to spell out the name of the drug when giving phone prescriptions and clearly print the name of the drug on written prescriptions.¹ Pharmacists are advised to store Reminyl and Amaryl apart from each other, to confirm the brandnames on prescriptions, to confirm the dose of new prescriptions for Amaryl 4mg (the starting dose for Amaryl is 1mg once daily and for Reminyl is 4mg twice daily), and to advise patients about the brandname, indication and proper use of the prescribed drug.²

Patients are advised to ask their physician to repeat the name of any drugs prescribed, to ask for the drug name to be written down clearly to take to the pharmacy, and to ask their pharmacist to double-check that the right medication has been received.³ Patients should also request a brochure on the drug where available, and read any package inserts supplied.

See also Reactions 1026: 2, 6 Nov 2004; 800999012

1. Health Canada. Medication errors involving REMINYL and AMARYL (Rm). Internet Document : [5 pages], 20 Dec 2004. Available from: URL: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>.

2. Health Canada. Medication errors involving REMINYL and AMARYL (Rm). Internet Document : [5 pages], 20 Dec 2004. Available from: URL: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>.

3. Health Canada. Errors in prescribing and dispensing of the medication REMINYL (galantamine hydrobromide) and AMARYL® (glimepiride). Media Release : 21 Dec 2004. Available from: URL: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>.