



Practice sting A snag in medication substitution

This practice sting is in particular interesting for pharmacists

Delivery problems of medicines necessitate substitution. No matter how well you arrange it, sometimes you overlook something, as the report below from a pharmacist shows.

Notification

Due to delivery problems of short-acting Lucrin® Depot 3.75 mg and 11.25 mg, the pharmacist, in consultation with the gynaecologists, urologists and oncologists of the local hospital, converts patients to long-acting Lucrin® Depot 30 mg. The pharmacist thought this would cover all indications of Lucrin®.

However, a woman prescribed Lucrin® by a gynaecologist at a university hospital protested, and rightly so, as it turned out. She used the monthly variant as part of a fertility treatment.

Analysis

Leuprorelin is marketed as a depot injection under the names Eligard® and Lucrin®. There is also a generic form of leuprorelin. The short-acting variant of Lucrin® was withdrawn from the market in July 2021. Lucrin® depot injections are commercially available in three strengths. The 3.75 mg works for one month, the 11.25 mg for three months and the 30 mg for six months.

The indications for Lucrin® depot injections mentioned in the Dutch Pharmacotherapeutic Compass and in the product information are:

- Moderate to severe endometriosis.
- Preoperatively for leiomyomas (fibroids) of the uterus in preparation for myomectomy or hysterectomy.
- As adjunctive treatment of oestrogen receptor-sensitive premenopausal breast cancer, when endocrine therapy is indicated.
- Idiopathic pubertas praecox (girls < 9 years and boys < 10 years).
- High-risk localized and locally extensive testosterone-sensitive prostate carcinoma, whether or not in combination with radiotherapy (as neo-adjuvant or adjuvant therapy) and metastatic prostate carcinoma.

In these indications patients often have to use Lucrin® for months. The depot preparation for one or three months can then usually be replaced by the preparation for six months.

However, leuprorelin is also used off-label in unexplained subfertility to achieve controlled ovarian hyperstimulation prior to IVF. Multiple follicles are obtained through the controlled hyperstimulation of the ovary. In this way the chances of conception and pregnancy are increased. The duration of treatment is several weeks.

Recommendations

For pharmacists

- In case of supply problems of leuprorelin, make substitution arrangements with the prescribers of this medicine. Keep in mind that leuprorelin is sometimes prescribed off-label.
- In a patient for whom leuprorelin needs to be substituted, find out the prescription reason.