Direct Healthcare Professional Communication

Jan 2025

Metamizole-containing medicines: important measures to minimize the serious outcomes of known risk of agranulocytosis

Dear Healthcare Professional,

The General Administration for Pharmaceutical Vigilance (PVGA) at the Egyptian drug authority (EDA) would like to inform you **about important measures to minimize the serious outcomes of agranulocytosis.**

Summary

- Patients treated with metamizole-containing medicines should be informed of the:
  - Early symptoms suggestive of agranulocytosis, including fever, chills, sore throat and painful mucosal changes, especially in the mouth, nose and throat or in the genital or anal region;
  - Need to remain vigilant for these symptoms as they may occur at any time during treatment, even shortly after treatment discontinuation;
  - Need to discontinue treatment and seek immediate medical attention if they develop these symptoms.

- If metamizole is taken for fever, some symptoms of emerging agranulocytosis may go unnoticed. Additionally, symptoms may also be masked in patients receiving antibiotic therapy.

- If agranulocytosis is suspected, a complete blood count (including differential blood count) should be performed immediately, and treatment must be stopped while waiting for the results. If confirmed, treatment must not be reintroduced.

- Routine blood count monitoring of patients treated with metamizole-containing medicines is no longer recommended

- Metamizole is contraindicated in patients with a prior medical history of metamizole-induced agranulocytosis (or from other pyrazolones/pyrazolidines), impaired bone marrow function or diseases of the haematopoietic system.

Background on the safety concern

Metamizole is a pyrazolone derivative, belonging to the group of non-opioid analgesics, with potent analgesic, antipyretic and spasmolytic properties, which is indicated for the treatment of certain types of pain as specified in the product information of each metamizole-containing medicine. Metamizole is available as a mono-component medicinal product(s).

Agranulocytosis, which can lead to serious or fatal infections, is a known side effect of metamizole-containing medicines. It involves a sudden and sharp decrease in granulocyte count (neutrophil levels below 0.5x109/l). lists agranulocytosis with frequency rare (occurring in up to 1 in 1,000 people), very rare (occurring in up to 1 in 10,000 people) or not known (cannot be estimated from the available data).>

Following EDA review, contraindications, warnings and precautions concerning the use of metamizole-containing medicines, for both patients and healthcare professionals, will be revised to minimize the serious outcomes of the known risk of agranulocytosis. This includes information when metamizole must not be used and how to facilitate prompt recognition and diagnosis of metamizole-induced agranulocytosis. The review included an evaluation of all available data, including the scientific literature and post-marketing reports, some of which involved a fatal outcome. The review did not identify evidence to support the effectiveness of routine blood count monitoring of patients for early recognition of the metamizole-induced agranulocytosis. Metamizole-induced agranulocytosis is not dose-dependent and can occur at any time during treatment, even in patients who have used these medicines previously without complications. Therefore, this practice is no longer recommended. The product information of metamizole-containing medicinal products will be updated to reflect these important measures to minimize the outcomes of the risk of agranulocytosis.

Reference

EMA:https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/dhpc/direct-healthcare-professional-communication-dhpc-metamizole-containing-medicines-important-measures-minimise-serious-outcomes-known-risk-agranulocytosis_en.pdf

Call for reporting

Healthcare professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse reactions via the Egyptian reporting system:

Name: General Administration for Pharmaceutical Vigilance

Email: pv.followup@edaegypt.gov.eg

Online reporting: https://vigiflow-eforms.who-umc.org/eg/med
QR Code:

PO Box: 11451

Hotline: 15301