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Celexa® – Abnormal Heart Rhythms (Observed with daily doses exceeding 40 mg)

NOTICE

On August 24, 2011 the FDA notified healthcare professionals and patients of heart rhythm abnormalities observed with the use of Celexa (citalopram) in patients utilizing more than 40 mg per day.

BACKGROUND

Celexa is a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) antidepressant FDA indicated for the treatment of depression; however, it is often used for the treatment of generalized anxiety and panic disorder in an off-label manner. Until recently, a maximum daily dose of 60 mg was recommended in patients who failed to respond to lower doses (clinical trials have demonstrated that total daily doses exceeding 40 mg do not provide additional antidepressant effects). Due to recent concerns over dose-related cardiac rhythm abnormalities, some which may be fatal, citalopram's drug label has been modified to indicate a maximum daily dose of 40 mg. The drug's label now also indicates the potential development of cardiac abnormalities (QTC prolongation and Torsade de Pointes) which may be possible with the use of citalopram. Patients with underlying heart conditions and low blood levels of potassium and magnesium are at an increased risk for citalopram-related cardiac anomalies.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Due to the recent change in the antidepressant's maximum recommended total daily dose the FDA has recommended that prescribers no longer prescribe citalopram at doses exceeding 40 mg per day. Furthermore, it is recommended that patients with congenital long QT syndrome should not utilize citalopram; patients with other cardiac conditions such as congestive heart failure, and those with low blood potassium and magnesium levels, may be at an increased risk for citalopram-related cardiac rhythm disturbances. The FDA has communicated these issues, as well as changes to the product labeling, to all healthcare professionals. As part of our MedAssess™ Clinical program, PMSI's clinical pharmacists will monitor for citalopram use above the recommended maximum and intervene with prescribers as necessary.

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