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BY FAX

21 July 2011

Dr. Raymond LIANG
President
Hong Kong Academy of Medicine
(Fax Number: 2505 5577)

Dear Dr. LIANG,

Metoclopramide: warnings on risk of abnormal muscle movements

Health Canada is informing health professionals and consumers that the labelling information for the gastro-intestinal drug metoclopramide is being updated to include stronger warnings on the risk of a movement disorder known as "tardive dyskinesia". The disorder is characterized by uncontrollable muscle movements, mainly in the face. The risk increases with longer treatment and is higher in the elderly, especially elderly women.

Tardive dyskinesia is a known side effect associated with metoclopramide. The current prescribing information contains information on this risk. Health Canada is working with the Canadian manufacturers to include stronger, more detailed warnings in the drug labelling that contain the following information:

- Tardive dyskinesia may develop in patients treated with metoclopramide. The elderly, especially elderly women, appear to be at increased risk. Tardive dyskinesia may not be easy to recognise in its early stages and it is more likely to be irreversible with long-term treatment (over 12 weeks).

- The risk appears to increase with treatment length and the total amount of drug taken.

- Less frequently, tardive dyskinesia can develop with short term treatment at low doses; in these cases, the symptoms are more likely to disappear either partially or completely over time, once treatment has been stopped.

- Metoclopramide treatment beyond 12 weeks should be avoided, unless the benefit is judged to outweigh the risk.

For detail, please refer to Health Canada's website:
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/_2011/2011_99-eng.php

In Hong Kong, there are 33 metocopramide-containing products registered and are prescription medicines. In view of Health Canada's recommendation, the issue will be discussed in the coming meeting of the Registration Committee of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board.

Please remind your members to report any adverse events caused by the drugs to the Adverse Drug Reaction Monitoring Unit of Department of Health (tel. no.: 2319 8633, fax: 2147-0457 or email: adr@dh.gov.hk). For details, please refer to the website: http://www.psdh.gov.hk at Pharmaceutical Service under "Reporting an Adverse Drug Reaction".

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Pamela LI)
for Chief Pharmacist