Updated August 2007

VARENICLINE (CHAMPIX®▼)

Salford NHS Primary Care Trust

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Evidence has considered Varenicline; their recommendation is:

- **Varenicline is recommended within its licensed indications as an option for smokers who have expressed a desire to quit smoking.**
- **Varenicline should normally be prescribed only as part of a programme of behavioural support. Consider referral to the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 0161-212-4050**

Salford Primary Care Trust Medicines Management Team would not recommend the first line use of Varenicline for the following reasons:

- **Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is the pharmacological agent of choice for smoking cessation. We have not seen evidence showing any advantage of Varenicline over NRT.**
- **The effectiveness of varenicline has been demonstrated in placebo and bupropion controlled clinical trials, but it is unlikely that the degree of patient counselling provided could be supplied in daily practice.**
- **Patients with diabetes, COPD, CHD, mental health problems and other long term conditions were excluded from the varenicline trials, and therefore evidence in these groups is lacking.**
- **Costs are based on a 12-week course. The licence allows for a further 12 weeks of treatment to be prescribed as maintenance therapy. Costs would increase greatly if it became standard practice to prescribe an additional 12-week course*.**
- **Data from the trials indicate that the most common adverse effect for varenicline was nausea, which may influence patient acceptability, although the majority of subjects rated it as mild.**
- **Additional adverse events included abnormal dreams and insomnia. Treatment related discontinuations were low; however, as concomitant support is unlikely to be as high in clinical practice as in the studies, there is potential for a higher rate of discontinuation and a reduction in efficacy in clinical practice.**
- **The SPC now states that, "post-marketing cases of myocardial infarction have been reported in patients taking varenicline". It should be noted that post-marketing surveillance data such as this is observational and may therefore be open to bias.**

Drug	Mode of Action	Type of Trial	Side Effects	Cost
NRT	Central	Concomitant support + Drug	Nausea, dizziness, headache.	Approx £100 for a 10-12 week course of patches.
Bupropion	Central	Concomitant support + Drug	Dry mouth, Gastro-intestinal disturbances, insomnia, tremor. CSM advice – contra-indicated in patients with history of seizures & eating disorders	£79.70 for a 9 week course
Varenicline	Central	Concomitant support + Drug	Nausea, abnormal dreams and insomnia	£163.80 for a 12 week course* or £327.60 if given for 24 weeks.

It may be appropriate to consider its use where bupropion may have previously been used, but bear in mind the points above.

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