

Our ref:

Your ref:

To Prescribing Lead GPs

19<sup>th</sup> September 2012

**Subject : Simvastatin – updated advice on drug interactions**

Dear Prescribing Lead GPs

I am sure you are all well aware of the recent MHRA warning regarding simvastatin and amlodipine/diltiazem. <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/home/groups/dsu/documents/publication/con180638.pdf>

In response to this, we have put together some recommendations for your consideration. We have also attached a useful UKMI document which was published last week in response to the Drug Safety Update, which gives some practical further information specifically for the implications for patients taking amlodipine. We are advising practices not to be too alarmed about this latest safety update. To put it into perspective, the risk of myopathy with simvastatin 40mg plus amlodipine is likely to be of a similar magnitude to taking simvastatin 80mg alone.

Obviously this Safety Update will be time consuming to action and needs to be carefully considered by each practice. The decision whether to change agent or reduce the dose is not an easy one. Currently there is no clinically significant interaction between amlodipine and atorvastatin but it must be borne in mind that atorvastatin is also metabolised by CYP3A4, but is less susceptible to interaction with CYP3A4 inhibitors than simvastatin due to its structure.

We have asked the Prescribing Lead GPs for each division to comment and also sought opinions from primary and secondary/tertiary care within the North West region. In summary there is wide variation in clinical opinion on the most appropriate course of action although the following recommendations are a fair summation of the general consensus of opinion;

**Primary Prevention:**

**First line:** Simvastatin 20mg .

**Second line:** options Atorvastatin 10mg (or Pravastatin 40mg)

**Secondary prevention.**

**First line:** for patients who are achieving an appropriate cholesterol reduction; reduce simvastatin dose to 20mg and repeat fasting lipids in 3 months.

**Second line:** for patients who have not achieved an appropriate reduction; Atorvastatin 40mg. This would cost an additional £22.10 per patient per year. Repeat fasting lipids in 3 months.

If you have patients taking the ezetimibe/simvastatin combination (*Inegy*), step down to the ezetimibe 10mg/simvastatin 20mg preparation.

**In all cases it is essential to check compliance before switching the dose or agent.**

*Professional services and solutions that support and transform the way commissioners improve the lives of their population*

We have enclosed a cost comparison table for your information.

Please note NICE have informed us that they are updating the QIPP Indicators but would not comment on whether atorvastatin will be included in the low cost statin QIPP parameter when it is updated early next year.

The Medicines Management Team will offer assistance with this piece of work by running searches to highlight appropriate patients, but practices are asked to undertake the reviews themselves. We have attached 2 template letters which you may wish to use/adapt to your specific requirements.

All of the above information will be posted on the MM website (<http://mm.wirral.nhs.uk/>)

If you need any further information please contact our Medicines Information Helpline on 0151 643 5338.

Best wishes



Judith Green  
Prescribing Adviser