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Part of a family owned business of three pharmacies and an automated closed-door institutional pharmacy located in Western, PA. Boswell Pharmacy Services has been providing pharmacy services for 40 years.

- Boswell Pharmacy Services
- Boswell Prescription Center
- Penn Laurel Pharmacy
- Martella's Pharmacy



## Drug News and New Drugs

### Chantix® warning

The FDA has issued a Public Health Advisory on the new safety warnings concerning Chantix® (varenicline), a medication used to help patients stop smoking. There seems to be an association between Chantix® and serious neuropsychiatric symptoms. These symptoms include "agitation, depressed mood, suicidal ideation, and actual suicidal behavior". Health care providers should consider the following when deciding if Chantix® is right for their patients. Does the patient have a history of psychiatric illnesses prior to starting Chantix®? If so, then Chantix® could possibly worsen these symptoms. Has the patient experienced any changes in mood or behavior while being treated with Chantix®? If so, then maybe Chantix® is not suitable for them. Patients may also experience vivid, unusual, or strange dreams as well as impairment when trying to drive or operate heavy machinery while taking Chantix®. These factors should all be considered on an individual basis when deciding

if Chantix® should be prescribed.

### Tussionex® alert

The FDA has also issued an alert pertaining to the safe and correct use of Tussionex Pennkinetic Extended-Release Suspension® (hydrocodone/chlorpheniramine), a long-acting cough suppressant. Many adverse events, including death, have been reported based on the misuse or inappropriate use of this cough suppressant. The following are recommendations from the FDA for health care providers. Tussionex® should not be used in patients less than 6 years of age. It should not be dosed at intervals less than every 12 hours since it is an extended-release product. Patients should also be instructed to immediately notify their physician if they experience trouble breathing, slow heartbeat, severe sleepiness or cold, clammy skin.

### Dextromethorphan Abuse

Caution should be used when patients continually ask for Robitussin DM® and other

cold and cough products. "Robotripping" is a new way to get "high" using over-the-counter cold and cough medications. Some of these medications include: Robitussin DM®, Coricidin HBP®, Vicks Nyquil®, and Vicks Formula 44®. Dextromethorphan is the key ingredient in these products which is producing the "high" feeling. The following is a list of symptoms associated with abuse of these products: blurred vision, delusions, dry mouth, hallucinations, headache, high blood pressure, high body temperature, irregular heart beat, loss of consciousness, numbness in fingers and toes, sweating stomach pains and vomiting.

### New Medications

Simcor®, a new cholesterol-lowering combination product, contains niacin extended release and simvastatin. This new combination tablet is available in the following strengths: 500mg/20mg, 750mg/20mg, and 1000mg/20mg.

(Continued on page 2)

## Drug News and New Drugs

(Continued from page 1)

Tekturna/Hct® is a new combination product used to treat high blood pressure. It contains the newly approved renin inhibitor (aliskiren) with hydrochlorothiazide. This new combination product has been shown to be more effective than either agent alone. Some adverse effects include dizziness, flu-like symptoms, diarrhea, cough, and tiredness.

OxyContin® (oxycodone controlled release) is now available in three new strength tablets: 15mg, 30mg, and 60mg. These new strengths should only be used for moderate to severe pain and should be dosed every 12 hours. The 60mg tablet along with the 80mg and 160mg tablets are intended for use in OPIOID-TOLERANT patients only. OxyContin® tablets should not be broken, chewed, or crushed but instead swallowed whole.

### New Generic Medications

Actonel® (risedronate) is available generically in 5mg, 30mg, and 35mg strength tablets.

Cosopt® (dorzolamide 2% / timolol 0.5%), a combination ophthalmic drop, is available as a generic product.

Fosamax® (alendronate) is now available as a generic product in 35mg and 70mg strength tablets as well as a 70mg/75mL strength liquid.

### Medication Error Prevention:

#### Abbreviations

We are still seeing prescriptions written with trailing and “naked” zeros. An example of a trailing zero is 5.0 mg, which could be mistaken for 50 mg. This should be written as 5 mg to avoid any confusion. An example of a “naked” zero is .5 mg, which could be mistaken for 5 mg. This should be

written as 0.5 mg to avoid any confusion. Prescribers should avoid the use of trailing and “naked” zeros so errors and confusion are less likely to occur.

### Sound-alike/Look-alike Drugs

Always be on the alert for drugs that either sound or look-alike. This can be a common cause for medication errors. Similarity between drug names, either brand or generic, can cause confusion and lead to errors.

Examples:

- Matulane® / Materna®
- Invirase® / Intelence®

## Ask The Pharmacists

**QUESTION:** What are some signs and indications that a patient is getting “high” off of cough and cold medications?

**ANSWER:** If a patient is constantly purchasing or requesting over-the-counter products that contain dextromethorphan, they may be using these products to get “high”, a problem called “robotripping”. Some products being abused are Robitussin DM®, Nyquil®, Coricidin HBP®, and Vicks®. Some symptoms associated with abuse of these products include: hallucinations, blurred vision, delusions, loss of consciousness, dry mouth, headache, high blood pressure, irregular heart beat, sweating, stomach pains and vomiting, and numbness in fingers and toes.

**QUESTION:** Should Tussionex® be prescribed for a 5 year old child dosed every 6 hours?

**ANSWER:** No, Tussionex® is only approved for use in patients greater than 6 years of age. Also, Tussionex® should be dosed every 12 hours since it is an extended-release product.

