Medication Safety Notice

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Issued by the Office of the Chief Pharmacist, SA Health
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/medicationsafety

A patient **Safety Notice** strongly advises the implementation of particular recommendations or solutions to improve quality and safety.

We recommend you inform:

- General Managers
- Pharmacy Directors
- Medical Directors
- Clinical Directors
- Nursing Directors
- Drug and Therapeutics Committees
- Medication Safety Committees
- Safety and Quality Units
- Clinical Governance

Contact details:

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Shortage of tocilizumab (Actemra®) medicines

Purpose

To highlight considerations for a global shortage of tocilizumab (Actemra®).

Background

Tocilizumab (Actemra®) is used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, giant cell arteritis, systemic juvenile idiopathic arthritis, polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis and cytokine release syndrome.

The World Health Organisation recently updated its patient care guidelines to include interleukin-6 receptor blockers (e.g. tocilizumab) as a class of medicines that are lifesaving in severely or critically ill COVID-19 patients. As a result, there has been a significant increase in global demand for this product leading to supply constraints.

Shortage Details

Shortages of Actemra® products are anticipated for the following estimated periods:

- Actemra® 400mg IV (Aug 2021 to Jan 2022)
- Actemra® 162mg/0.9mL pre-filled syringe (Aug – Oct 2021)
- Actemra® 162mg/0.9mL pre-filled pen, ACTPen autoinjector (Sep – Oct 2021).

Whilst there are shortages of some Actemra® intravenous (IV) strengths, Roche, the sponsor of Actemra® in Australia, have advised **there will be overall sufficient supply of other Actemra® IV strengths for hospitals for the normal usage** by patients for the registered indications.

There will be a period of up to 6 weeks where both the Actemra® **pre-filled syringe and ACTPen autoinjector will be in shortage at patient level**.

Recommendations for prescribers

- The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has met with Roche, the Australian Rheumatology Association (ARA), and Arthritis Australia to discuss clinical management options during the shortage. Further information will be provided shortly.
- Consider the current shortage of tocilizumab when prescribing, particularly when initiating new patients on treatment for the registered tocilizumab indications.

Action required by SA Health staff and services

1. Ensure all relevant staff are aware of, and have access to, this notice.
2. Conduct a risk assessment to determine if these issues are relevant to your facility and/or your practice.
3. Determine a local approach in conjunction with the Pharmacy department, Rheumatology department, and/or other local specialists as appropriate.

Further information

For any enquiries or concerns, please contact your pharmacist or pharmacy department directly; or email HealthMedicationSafety@sa.gov.au.

Refer to the TGA website for the most up to date information regarding the shortage.

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Government of South Australia
SA Health