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End of Life Form Update

The loss of atropine drops has forced us to rejig our *End of Life Order Set*. While glycopyrrolate and scopolamine injections are effective, they must be administered frequently and are not always readily available. As proposed in the *May GeriJournal*, subcutaneous administration of one of the injectable products followed by Transderm V® (scopolamine) patch application may be a superior option.

Transderm's onset of action is approximately four hours, which closely matches the duration of action of both injectable products. As the single/stat dose of injection wears off, scopolamine absorption from the patch reaches therapeutic levels. Though monitoring of secretions must continue, further injections are usually not required. The patch should be applied to a hairless area behind the ear and must be changed three days after initial application.

We have also made an addition to the *Nausea/Vomiting* section

of the form. Olanzapine oral dissolving tablets (ODT) can be used when swallowing is compromised, delaying the progression to injectable products. It can also help to treat end of life delirium. The dose is 5mg daily. The mouth should be moistened before administration.

Scarce EpiPens

The lack of EpiPen availability has garnered much attention in the press over the past month. The reasons for this shortage are unclear, but this has been an urgent situation for those with life threatening, anaphylactic allergies.

The availability problem has prompted researchers, Pfizer (the manufacturer) and Health Canada to make statements regarding the viability of EpiPens beyond their expiration date. All agree that the pens are good for an extended period. A California Poison Control Centre confirmed this by testing forty pens that had been actively carried prior to expiry. Nineteen pens were expired between one and twenty-nine months, and each one held at least 90% of the stated dose of epinephrine! Two of the pens had been expired for 50 months, and they contained 84 and 88% of the stated content.

Health Canada and Pfizer remind us that products expire at the end of the month of the

date displayed (e.g. Aug. 31st). Since Epi Pens stocked in our facilities are stored under ideal conditions, they would be expected to retain their potency for at least as long as those in the *Ann Intern Med, 2017* study quoted from California. EpiPens are beginning to become available again, but more shortages are anticipated. Consider retaining recently expired pens if replacements are not available. Adrenalin ampules are still in good supply, so our adrenaline kits provide another option.

Fix Hips Quick

Hip fractures are all too common in our seniors. They are often responsible for residents moving into care facilities or being sent to hospital when they sustain an injury in one of our homes.

Earlier this month, the *CMAJ* published an article stressing how timely surgical repair leads to positive outcomes. The study looked at nearly 140,000 elderly Canadians who underwent hip surgery between 2004 and 2012. Patients who were not medically stable were excluded from the analysis.

The 2005 Canadian benchmark states that 90% of hip fracture surgeries should be performed within 48 hours of admission. The current study supports this, with an extra 11 deaths per 1,000 procedures when surgery is delayed until day 3 or longer.

*Prepared by Randy Goodman
Board Certified Geriatric Pharmacist*