



HAPPY
FATHER'S
DAY

The Gerijournal

Volume 3, Number 6

June 2008

A publication of GeriatRx Pharmacy

Actonel and Swallowing

Dysphagia necessitates the crushing of many drugs in LTC facilities. Crushing alters drug absorption, and very few medications are approved for administration in this state.

Actonel® and Fosamax® are of particular concern for the dysphagic resident, because of their potential to damage the esophagus. They are also a challenge because they are to be administered only with water. Mixing them with jam or applesauce can diminish their absorption significantly.

Actonel® is the preferred agent for residents with dysphagia. The first reports of esophageal erosions occurred in patients taking Fosamax®. Actonel® is also a smaller, easier to swallow tablet.

An alternative method of administration for Actonel® has been proposed for those with swallowing difficulties. Actonel® can be dropped into two ounces of water. After two minutes the liquid is stirred with a metal spoon for several seconds. The drug will have dissolved and the resident can

drink the slightly salty liquid. The resident should then be given a minimum of four ounces of water to clear the product from the esophagus.

Procter and Gamble, the manufacturer of Actonel®, has tested this method of administration. They found that the product is stable and well tolerated. They cannot officially endorse this method of administration, however.

Limited Use News

The doctors, pharmacists and LTC nurses of our province have reason to rejoice! The paperwork burden of LU (Limited Use) prescriptions has been lightened a bit.

Until now, coverage for LU drugs has been refused unless the physician has written a *Reason for Use Code* on the original prescription before faxing or sending it to the pharmacy. Rule changes now allow the pharmacist to contact the doctor to obtain the code if it has been omitted. We can also accept the code over the phone with verbal orders.

We still ask that the physician write the code on the original order or the LU request form that we may send. The verbal option will be helpful for telephone orders, renewals and situations where receipt of a signed LU form has been delayed.

To Drink, or Not to Drink

For some years now, we've heard that drinking a glass or two of red wine reduces our risk of developing cardiovascular disease. A large study of postmenopausal women in the U.S. released last month indicated that alcohol consumption increases a woman's risk of developing breast cancer. It's difficult to know what to do.

Now we have more information to ponder. The *American Journal of Medicine* has released a study showing that moderate alcohol intake (1/2 to 1 drink daily) reduces the incidence of hip fracture. This benefit occurs because alcohol increases bone density at the neck of the femur, the primary site of hip fracture.

Don't throw away your calcium, vitamin D, Actonel® or Fosamax® just yet. It is comforting to know, however, that the addition of a small amount of alcohol may prevent a critical fracture. Of course, if you are a woman with risk factors for breast cancer, you likely won't want to consider this therapeutic option. Excessive alcohol intake is always inadvisable, and interestingly, was associated with a greater incidence of hip fractures.

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