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Warfarin Facts Sheet

ISMP has identified a number of medications as “High-Alert Drugs”. These drugs present a tremendous risk if they are administered improperly or monitored poorly. Warfarin is a member of this group.

We have produced a simple glossy *Warfarin Facts Sheet* to highlight the key areas such as monitoring, adverse effects, drug interactions and dietary concerns with this medication. It is ideal for posting in the med room or MAR binder for quick reference. Let us know if you would like copies sent out to each of your units.

Lantus Solostar

Lantus® insulin was added to the provincial formulary in December, but only the pen cartridge and 10 cc vial formats were covered. Neither of these products is ideal. The pen cartridges must be used with Sanofi-Aventis’ Autopen® device. This device has a 48 Unit capacity and can be awkward to use. Vials are undesirable in the institutional setting because they are not compatible with insulin pens.

This month, the Lantus Solostar® pen was approved for coverage by ODB. It is a disposable pen which is preloaded with Lantus® cartridges. It can inject up to 80 Units per dose.

The Solostar® is more user friendly than the Autopen®. It is also quite similar in function to the insulin pens used in our facilities. As such, we will be dispensing Lantus Solostar® for all new and repeat orders for Lantus® insulin, unless directed otherwise by nursing or medical staff. Once started, Lantus® insulin should be kept out of the refrigerator and any unused insulin remaining in the pen should be discarded after 28 days. The product comes with a comprehensive instruction guide. We can also send a training DVD to anyone who is interested.

Persnickety Pen Needles

The new retractable insulin pen needles are proving to be a bit of a challenge. Blood sugars have risen without explanation in a number of cases and increases in insulin dosage have failed to stem the increases. Proper technique is a must if consistent results are to be achieved.

The insulin pen must be perpendicular to the injection site. The Autocover® needle has not penetrated fully until the wide portion of the white barrel is resting against the

skin. At that point no additional pressure should be applied. If the resident is obese, the skin should be pinched gently to create a firm injection site. The same should be done for frail residents to prevent i.m. injection.

When using the Novolin Pen 4, please ensure that it is held in place for at least six seconds after the injection is complete. With the Lantus Solostar®, the pen should be held in place for ten seconds post-injection. Please remember to prime all new cartridges by expelling 4 Units of insulin. Cartridges in use should be primed with 1 Unit of insulin repeatedly, until a drop of insulin appears at the tip of the needle.

Diabetic Neuropathy Rx

Cymbalta® (duloxetine) is an antidepressant drug with some analgesic properties. It is particularly effective in treating pain caused by diabetic neuropathy.

ODB has announced that it will cover Cymbalta® to treat this disorder if a patient has failed an adequate trial with both a tricyclic antidepressant (e.g. Elavil®, desipramine) or Neurontin® (gabapentin). The maximum approved dosage is 60 mg daily. The most common side effects are nausea, dizziness, fatigue and sleepiness.

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