

# The GeriJournal

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## **Paxlovid – Crush Away**

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Pfizer's product monograph states "The tablets should be swallowed whole and not chewed, broken, or crushed." Of course, most product monographs make the same statement, which we almost always ignore (not with enteric-coated, sustained-release, cytotoxic products, etc.) when dealing with our dysphagic seniors.

Now, a study from the *BC COVID Advisory Committee* has confirmed that crushing Paxlovid® is OK in our vulnerable population. Ritonavir and nirmatrelvir were crushed and added to pudding, apple sauce, water, and other common liquids. Serum drug levels were indistinguishable from those obtained when the tablets were swallowed whole. Conventional G-tube administration also yielded the same results. Paxlovid® should not be withheld based on swallowing status.

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## **Paxlovid – Don't Believe the Expiry Date**

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I just cannot stop talking about Paxlovid®! In 2020 Paxlovid® did not exist. In 2021 the folks

at Pfizer began testing this combination product and a star was born. By late 2021, Paxlovid® was being mass-produced and governments around the world were falling over themselves to purchase millions of doses.

Unfortunately, new drugs (e.g., the nalmetrivir component of Paxlovid®) have no long-term stability data, so they are usually short-dated as a precaution. That date has arrived! Most of our current supply shows an expiry date of February or March 2023. Understandably, nurses are reluctant to use these boxes.

Pfizer now has extended stability data that shows Paxlovid® can be used safely for 6-months beyond the posted expiry date. The attached notification will accompany all future Paxlovid® prescriptions until the current supply is exhausted.

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## **Ozempic® Pen Hysteria**

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Chances are the next Rx you see for Ozempic® will not be for a diabetic. Its popularity as a weight loss treatment has placed an extraordinary demand on the drug. Not only is the worldwide supply of Ozempic® being taxed, but so too is the supply of pens used to administer it.

This is having an unfortunate domino effect. Novo Nordisk manufactures both Ozempic®

and a range of pen-administered insulins. To satisfy the burgeoning demand, they are redeploying Flexpens® used to administer Novo Rapid and Levemir to their Ozempic® division. Soon, those insulin products will only be available in cartridges for use with permanent insulin pens (NovoPen®) or vial format, in the case of NovoRapid®. Manufacturing capacity is being increased, but it will take some time before this added volume comes on stream.

In related news, another ODB-covered rapid insulin has been added to an already dizzying list. BGP Pharma has introduced Kirsty® rapid-acting insulin in a pen format. Chemically, it matches NovoRapid® and Trurapi®, but it is not interchangeable. We now have another insulin to remember with Humalog® and Admelog®, our other rapids.

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## **Isopto-Tears® Returns**

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For the past five years, Isopto-Tears® has been a "no-show" on the Government Pharmacy (OGP) drug list. In response, many homes have switched to Tears Naturale II® or had GeriatRx dispense and label Isopto-Tears®. Isopto-Tears is finally back on the OGP list. This may mean that we will soon be prohibited from sending the product. If so, you will have to revert to ordering it from OGP and use an in-house (e.g., PCC) labeling system.

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