

**DH CIRCULAR No. 455/2012**

DH: 4074/2012

28<sup>th</sup> November 2012

**Attention All:** Medical Practitioners  
Pharmacists  
Pharmacy Technicians  
Nurses

**Re: Dementia Treatment**

Donepezil tablets have been recommended by the Government Formulary List Advisory Committee and approved by the Superintendent of Public Health for introduction onto the Government Formulary List. This is the first dementia treatment to have been positively considered for inclusion. Donepezil is recommended in international guidelines for the symptomatic treatment of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease (AD). The Department is monitoring the situation on an ongoing basis and is currently further evaluating the use of NMDA receptor antagonists for moderate to severe Alzheimers with a view to widening the therapeutic range of medicines available to treat dementia.

The recommended dose of donepezil is 5 or 10mg daily, preferably taken in the evening, and may be taken with or without food. A decision to increase the dose of donepezil should not be made until the patient has been on a daily dose of 5mg for 4-6 weeks. In comparison with titration over 1 week, titration over 4-6 weeks appears to reduce the frequency of adverse events.

The introduction of free dementia treatment, namely Donepezil, is being performed in conjunction with the setting up of new Dementia Clinics in the community. These together with the Memory Clinic that currently exists within the Rehabilitation Hospital Karin Grech and the Cognitive Behavioral Disorders Clinic within the Neurology Department at Mater Dei Hospital as well as the Old Age Psychiatry Clinics provide specialized care to patients with Dementia.

Consultant Geriatricians, Neurologists and Psychiatrists are authorized to prescribe donepezil tablets for non-institutionalized patients diagnosed with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease (AD) and with a Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE) score ranging from 13 - 26. Initially, the treatment will be approved for 6 months, monitoring and yearly reviews thereafter. Donepezil tablets are protocol-regulated by protocol number 58 (attached).



*L-Uffiċċju tal-Uffiċjal Mediku Ewlieni*

*Office of the Chief Medical Officer*

Persons who are already being followed up by one of the consultants in the three specialist fields referred to above should be referred to that same consultant to be considered for eligibility for Donepezil.

Patients who are currently not being followed up by a consultant in one of the three specialities should be referred by their doctor through a ticket of referral as follows:

- Persons up to the age of 70 years with a possible diagnosis of dementia should be referred to Dr. Norbert Vella, Neurology Out-patients, Mater Dei Hospital.
- Persons above the age of 70 years with a possible diagnosis of dementia and medical co-morbidities should be referred to Dr. Stephen Abela, Medical Office, Rehabilitation Hospital Karin Grech.
- Persons with possible diagnosis of dementia and psychiatric co-morbidities should be referred to Dr. Anton Grech, Mount Carmel Hospital.

The prescribing Consultant needs to complete a Dementia Register Form '*for persons on anti-dementia medication D1*' when prescribing donepezil for dementia so that the necessary information is gathered with respect to dementia patients. This needs to be submitted with the Schedule V form when applying for Donepezil and on subsequent visits as per protocol.

Consultants will also need to complete a different dementia register form for persons '*not applying for anti dementia medication D2*' who while being followed up within these clinics for dementia do not fulfill the criteria for eligibility for donepezil. This is being done in order to develop a comprehensive dementia register.

I would like to thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Dr. Natasha Azzopardi Muscat  
Chief Medical Officer

## **Donepezil 5mg and 10mg Tablets**

**Prescriber Criteria:** Consultant Geriatricians  
Consultant Neurologists  
Consultant Psychiatrists

**Out-Patient and In-patient use:**  
Dementia

Reserved for, non-institutionalised patients diagnosed with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease (AD), with a Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE) score ranging from 13 - 26.

**Duration of Approval:**  
6 months initially  
1 year thereafter