OFFICE of the DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY for HEALTH
15, PALAZZO CASTELLANIA, MERCHANTS STREET, VALLETTA, MALTA

DH Circular 10/2021
DH 661/2016

8th February 2021

Attention All: Consultants
Medical Doctors
Pharmacists
Pharmacy Technicians
Nurses

Re: Change in Brand of Lithium Carbonate 400mg Prolonged Release Tablets

Lithium carbonate is used for treatment and prophylaxis of mania, manic-depressive illness and recurrent depression, and the treatment of aggressive or self-mutilating behaviour and treatment resistant depression. Lithium carbonate has a narrow therapeutic window and the dose required for treatment must be titrated and adjusted on the basis of regular monitoring of the serum concentration.

Lithium carbonate 400mg prolonged release tablets are on the Government Formulary List. Patients suffering from Chronic Mood Disorders, Chronic Neurotic Disorders, Chronic Psychiatric Disorders Starting in Childhood, Psychosis and Schizophrenia are entitled to this drug.

Lithium carbonate 400mg was until recently procured as the branded Priadel® 400mg prolonged release tablets. Once all stock of Priadel® 400mg tablets is exhausted, lithium carbonate will be available as Camcolit® 400mg controlled release tablets.

The switching of brands requires individualized determination of dose, close monitoring of serum lithium levels and vigilance for relapse and tolerability in all cases.

Monitoring of plasma lithium levels as recommended in the product's Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) is required. The SPC advises that as bioavailability may vary between formulations, blood levels should be monitored weekly until restabilisation is achieved.

It is recommended that a baseline serum lithium level should be taken before switching. Serum lithium levels should be taken 12 hours after the last dose.

Toxic symptoms are usually associated with concentrations exceeding 1.5 mmol/l and levels above 1.5mmol/l should be avoided. In the event of toxicity, lithium should be withdrawn immediately.

Prescribers, patients and their carers should be aware of the common signs and symptoms of lithium toxicity. Signs of toxicity include, but are not limited to, the following (prescribers should consult product literature for further information):

- Nausea, diarrhoea, blurred vision, polyuria, light headedness, fine resting tremor, muscular weakness, drowsiness and increasing confusion.

Office of the Chief Medical Officer (Health)
t +356 22992232 **e** denis.vella-baldacchino@gov.mt

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Patients should be reminded not to make any major lifestyle changes during the process of switching; in particular, they should maintain stable levels of fluid intake and exercise. If possible, other medications should not be initiated or altered until stabilization on the new brand of lithium has been achieved. This is particularly important for medications with known interactions with lithium, including over the counter medications such as NSAIDs.

For full product information please refer to the SPC or Package leaflet.

For your attention please.

Dr. Denis Vella Baldacchino
Chief Medical Officer

Office of the Chief Medical Officer (Health)
t +356 22992232 **e** denis.vella-baldacchino@gov.mt