CHRONOLOGY: NIMESULIDE IN EUROPE

1985 -Nimesulide is first marketed in Europe.

1985 - Reports of serious adverse reactions to nimesulide begin to surface from across Europe.[i] [ii]

2002 - Finland and Spain withdraw the medicine from the market following cases of liver injury caused by nimesulide. [iii]Shortly afterwards, Finland alerted the EMA, which mandated representatives from Italy, the country with the highest consumption of nimesulide, and Finland to report on the safety profile of the medicine.[iv]

2003 - Patients taking nimesulide have double the chance of suffering severe liver damage compared to the risk posed by other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory, according to a recently published Italian study conducted on 397 500 patients between 1997 and 2001.[v]

2004 - Nimesulide retains its licence for the European market, following the EMA's re-evaluation of the medicine. Certain limitations are also imposed, such as a lower maximum dose.[vi]

2007 - Ireland suspends the sale of nimesulide after six cases of liver failure requiring liver transplants are reported in association with the medicine.[vii]

2007 - This prompted the EMA to re-evaluate the safety profile of nimesulide, this time appointing Ireland as the rapporteur. The EMA ruled that the data did not support a move to suspend the marketing of nimesulide across Europe. However, the use of nimesulide is further restricted to a second-line treatment at the lowest effective dose.[viii]

2008 - Over 570 cases of hepatic disorders associated with nimesulide are reported from across Europe since 1985.[ix]

2010 - Patients have 2.5 times higher risk of hospitalisation for acute liver damage with nimesulide than with other non-steroidal anti-inflammatories,[x] according to a case-control study conducted between 2001 and 2004 but not published until this year.[xi]

2011 - The EMA affirms that the benefits of nimesulide-containing medicines continue to outweigh the risks, while its use is restricted to treat only acute pain and menstrual pain.[xii] [xiii]

[ii] La revue prescrire. Nimesulide: patients still exposed to a risk of severe hepatitis (2011) URL: http://english.prescrire.org/en/D888466637A59AC42A489AA0BEBB2235/Download.aspx

[iii] EMA post-authorisation evaluation of nimisulide (2004) URL: http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Referrals_document/Nimesulide_31/WC500013818.pdf

[iv] See EMA post-authorisation evaluation of nimisulide (2004)

[v] Traversa G et al. "Cohort study of hepatotoxicity associated with nimesulide and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs".

[vi] See EMA post-authorisation evaluation of nimisulide (2004)

[vii] EMA Press Release - European Medicines Agency recommends restricted use of nimesulide-containing medicinal products (2009) URL: http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Press_release/2009/11/WC500011199.pdf

[viii] See EMA Press Release (2009)

[ix] See La revue prescrire (2011)

[x] Except with celecoxib, rofecoxib, diclofenac and ibuprofen

[xi] Lee CH et al. "Increased risk of hospitalization for acute hepatitis in patients with previous exposure to NSAIDs" *Pharmacoepidemiol Drug Saf* 2010;

[xii] The review of nimesulide was conducted in the context of a formal review under Article 31 of Directive 2001/83/EC, initiated in January 2010 at the request of the European Commission

[xiii] EMA Press Release - European Medicines Agency concludes review of systemic nimesulide-containing medicines (2011) URL: www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Press_release/2011/06/WC500107903.pdf

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