Vitamin D Bulletin

New Guideline available:
The local guidelines for the management of Vitamin D deficiency in primary care have now been ratified and are available via NHS Croydon intranet: [Link]. Copies can be obtained by contacting the pharmaceutical team on 0208 274 6223 or by email at: cro-pct.pharmacyadmin@nhs.net

Recent Incidents- Lessons for Learning
Following several recent cases (summarised below) of vitamin D toxicity being identified in patients in Croydon, we would like to highlight the importance of ensuring that patients with vitamin D deficiency are treated with the correct treatment dose and treatment interval. Early symptoms of vitamin D toxicity include thirst, polyuria, constipation, nausea, vomiting and weight loss; however if left untreated, toxicity can result in renal failure.

Case 1
A female patient was found to have a vitamin D level of 20 nmol/L in April 2011. She was given the following prescription:
20,000 units THREE times a day – Qty 90 capsules
This was dispensed by a community pharmacy in Croydon. A 25-OH vitamin D level of 315 nmol/L was found in Dec 2011.

Case 2
Due to supply problems with the capsules, a patient was issued with a prescription for 300,000 u/mL ergocalciferol injections x 10 amps (=10 months supply!!) They received just one injection, but went on to receive prescriptions for 50,000 unit ergocalciferol capsules TWICE daily for 8 months. On discovering the error the patient’s 25-OH vitamin D level was found to be 375 nmol/L.

Case 3
A female patient with a vitamin D level of 17 nmol/L in May 2011. She was supplied a prescription for:
20,000 units once daily for 12 weeks. The error was only identified when her level was rechecked in Oct 2011 and was found to be 239 nmol/L, by which point she also had developed hypercalcaemia.

Actions for Prescribers:
- Check that all patients currently prescribed high dose colecalciferol have been issued with the correct dose (weekly in adults).
- People identified as being vitamin D deficient [i.e. 25(OH)D levels < 25 nmol/L] should be started on a high dose treatment course.

First line adult high dose treatment course:
60,000 units of colecalciferol (prescribed as 3 x 20,000 unit) capsules ONCE WEEKLY for 8-12 weeks ONLY.

Based on above recommendation required quantity of capsules will be 24 (8wks) or 36 (for 12 week course).

- When initiating high dose treatment always prescribe full treatment course as an acute item. DO NOT add high dose colecalciferol courses onto the repeat prescription system.

Actions for Community Pharmacists:
- Check all prescriptions for vitamin D preparations for accuracy of dosing.
- Query with the prescriber any prescriptions where the dose/quantity is not in line with local guidelines.
- Refer to the specials monograph for colecalciferol for details of preferred suppliers.

In the pipeline....
An 800 unit colecalciferol capsule (Fultium®) is now licensed and should be available by end of Jan 2012.

The MHRA are also in the process of fast-tracking the licensing of a high dose colecalciferol preparation, which will reduce need of prescribing specials. Further details will follow.