How the New FDA Opioid Guidelines Affect Use of NSAIDs

To combat the dangerous misuse and abuse of, and addiction to, extended-release/long-acting (ER/LA) opioid analgesics, the FDA has ordered a class-wide label change that limits their use only “for the management of pain severe enough to require daily, around-the-clock, long-term opioid treatment and for which alternative treatment options are inadequate.”

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are already one of the most commonly used medications in the United States. Given the increased scrutiny on use of opioids, it is likely that physicians and patients will rely even more on prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) NSAIDs for relief of moderate pain. Therefore, it is important to educate patients about NSAIDs and remind them to use any NSAID at the lowest effective dose for the shortest period of time required to achieve therapeutic effect.

Many patients are not sure which products are NSAIDs and may take multiple OTC products containing NSAIDs, complicating their appropriate use. There are several steps that health care providers can take to help ensure appropriate NSAID use. A thorough medication review at each patient visit, including OTC products, can prevent patients from combining NSAID products and provides an opportunity to educate them about appropriate NSAID use. Patients should be educated about which medications are NSAIDs and where to find NSAID information on the packaging of OTC products. Additionally, a pain assessment at every patient visit can help to ensure that NSAID dose and duration are closely guided by therapeutic need.

The Alliance for Rational Use of NSAIDs—a public health coalition—aims to bridge the gap between guidance and clinical practice, educating health care professionals and the public-at-large to ensure appropriate and safe use of NSAIDs.

To download educational materials and learn more about the Alliance for Rational Use of NSAIDs, visit www.NSAIDAlliance.com.

To learn more about the new FDA guidelines, visit www.fda.gov/newsevents/newsroom/pressannouncements/ucm367726.htm.


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