



Alzheimer's Drug Therapy Initiative

CLINICIAN OUTLINE

Effective October 22, 2007, through the Alzheimer's Drug Therapy Initiative (ADTI), PharmaCare will begin to provide coverage of the cholinesterase inhibitors donepezil (Aricept[®]), galantamine (Reminyl[®]) and rivastigmine (Exelon[®]) for eligible individuals diagnosed with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease, including patients with Alzheimer's disease with a vascular component or Parkinsonian features.

In some studies, cholinesterase inhibitors have been shown to benefit cognition, functional abilities and behaviour, either stabilizing or improving the course of the disease over time in some patients. Cholinesterase inhibitors are part of the overall management of dementia patients which includes making an accurate diagnosis, monitoring cognition and function and supporting caregivers to allow the patient to remain safely at home for as long as possible with community resources.

Patients need to be assessed at onset of therapy and every 6 months thereafter to confirm their ongoing eligibility for PharmaCare coverage of cholinesterase inhibitors. Coverage is subject to the patient's plan, annual deductible and family maximum. For the duration of the ADTI, coverage will be continued for as long as the medication is tolerated and seen to be effective. Once a patient moves into the category of severe dementia, or is classified as a non-responder, coverage will be discontinued.

The process for coverage is summarized below and in the attached algorithm. This information is also available on the ADTI website at www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharme/.

1. Familiarize yourself with the attached educational information on Managing Cognitive Impairment in the Elderly (GPAC Guidelines)
2. Determine if there is a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease
3. Review eligibility criteria (Standardized Mini-Mental State Examination (SMMSE) ≥ 10 to ≤ 26 , Global Deterioration Scale (GDS) ≥ 4 to ≤ 6)
4. Review the contraindications/side effects/drug interactions
5. Confirm that patient has the ability or support necessary to properly take the medication
6. Provide patient and caregiver with brochure and handout (see attached)
7. Submit a Special Authority form for initial coverage
8. Begin the cholinesterase inhibitor (see dosing/titration guidelines on the Special Authority form)
9. At 1-3 months, evaluate for tolerability (common side effects - nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, sleep disturbance)
10. Evaluate cognition, function and behaviour every 6 months to determine effectiveness of medication using SMMSE, GDS, and overall patient assessment rating
11. Submit Special Authority Form for Renewal/Switching Cholinesterase Inhibitors with results of the 6-month assessment. Coverage for eligible patients will be extended for 6 months at a time
12. Consider discontinuing or switching medication if there is poor tolerability or the patient is not responding. Patients are permitted to try all three of the eligible cholinesterase inhibitors. Please use the Special Authority Request for Renewal/Switching Cholinesterase Inhibitors.
13. Submit any questions regarding Special Authority approval in writing to the Special Authority fax number: 1-800-609-4884.

As part of the ADTI, certain individuals may be enrolled in a peer-reviewed research study to determine the group most likely to benefit from treatment with cholinesterase inhibitors. You will be contacted again soon about your interest in participating in this worthwhile research initiative.

It is hoped that the ADTI will be a helpful addition to the management of individuals in the mild to moderate stages of Alzheimer's disease.