



# Martella's Pharmacy

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## MARTELLA'S PHARMACY TIMES

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### Martella's Pharmacy

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Part of a family owned business of three pharmacies and an automated closed-door institutional pharmacy located in Western, PA. Martella's Pharmacy has been providing pharmacy services for over 40 years.

- Boswell Pharmacy Services
- Boswell Prescription Center
- Penn Laurel Pharmacy
- Martella's Pharmacy



**H**appy New Year from the staff at

**Martella's Pharmacy!**  
We hope everyone enjoyed the holiday season and we are looking forward to working with you in 2008.

## Drug News and New Drugs

### Fentanyl Health Advisory

The FDA has issued a public health advisory for patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals on the safe use of fentanyl transdermal patches. Some important safety information according to the FDA is listed here. The fentanyl patch is only for opioid-tolerant patients and patients with chronic pain not controlled on other medications. The patch should not be used to treat sudden, occasional, or mild pain. If prescribing or using the fentanyl patch, you should be aware of signs of over dosage; difficulty breathing, dizziness, cold clammy skin, slow heart-beat, and trouble walking or talking. Prescribers should be aware of all other medications the patient is currently taking and they should also instruct the patient on how to use the fentanyl patch. Patients should not use electric blankets, heating pads, heated waterbeds, take hot showers, or sun bathe while wearing a fentanyl patch. Also, patients should notify their prescriber if they have a fever of 102°F or higher while wearing the fentanyl patch.

### New indication for Abilify®

Abilify® (aripiprazole) is the first antipsychotic approved for depression. It is used as add-on therapy with antidepressants to

increase their effects. The initial recommended dose for depression is 2mg to 5mg per day but the dose can be increased to 15mg per day. Abilify® may help with depression but it may also increase the incidence of side effects such as restlessness, insomnia, constipation, and fatigue.

### Exubera® Product Withdrawal

Pfizer® has decided to discontinue the making of Exubera® (inhaled human insulin powder). This discontinuation is not due to poor safety or efficacy but because the product has shown poor patient and physician acceptance. Exubera® will be available until January 16, 2008 in order to give physicians and patients enough time to change to a different antidiabetic agent.

### Clozapine Monitoring

Clozapine is an atypical antipsychotic agent used to treat schizophrenia. This medication may cause a severe drop in the white blood cell count (WBC). Therefore, all patients taking clozapine must be continuously monitored to check for and try to prevent this serious side effect. Patients must have blood levels drawn to measure their **WBC** and **ANC** (absolute neutrophil count). The WBC must be  $\geq 3500 \text{ mm}^3$  and the ANC must be  $\geq 2000 \text{ mm}^3$  in

order for the prescription to be filled safely. According to the clozapine package insert, patients are monitored at different intervals throughout their treatment. At initiation of therapy, patients are monitored weekly for 6 months. If patients have been treated for 6 to 12 months, then their blood work can be drawn every 2 weeks for 6 months. After the patient has been on clozapine for 12 months, they are monitored every 4 weeks. It is very important that within **7 days** of the blood work being **drawn**, the pharmacists at Martella's Pharmacy receive a copy of the results containing the **WBC** and **ANC** in order to fill the prescription correctly and safely.

### NEW MEDICATIONS

**Combigan®** (brimonidine tartrate 0.2%/ timolol maleate 0.5%) is a new combination ophthalmic drop indicated for patients with glaucoma or ocular hypertension and is used for the reduction of elevated intraocular pressure (IOP). Combigan® is dosed twice daily and is available in a 5mL and a 10mL bottle.

**Chantix®** (varenicline) is a new non-nicotine agent used to aid in smoking cessation treatment. The patient must first set a target

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quit date (TQD) and the medication is started a week before this date by an increasing dose titration. Chantix® should be taken for 12 weeks with the following dosing regimen; Days 1-3: 0.5mg PO QD. Days 4-7: 0.5mg PO BID. Remainder of treatment: 1mg PO BID. If patients have been successful quitters, an additional 12 weeks of treatment is recommended to help ensure long-term abstinence. The most common side effects were nausea, sleep disturbances, constipation, flatulence, and vomiting. Chantix® should be taken after eating with a full glass of water. If patients were unsuccessful at quitting, they should be encouraged to try again. GetQuit® is a personalized behavioral support program available through Chantix®.

**Perforomist®** (formoterol) is a long acting beta agonist. This inhalation solution is used for maintenance treatment of bronchoconstriction in patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Perforomist® is dosed 20mcg twice daily via a nebulizer. The maximum daily dose is 40mcg. This medication should be stored in the refrigerator but it is good for 3 months out of the refrigerator. The unit-dose vials should only be removed immediately before usage.

**Amrix®** (cyclobenzaprine) is an extended release once a day muscle relaxant. It is available in 15mg and 30mg extended release capsules.

**Azor®** (amlodipine/olmesartan) is a combination medication containing a calcium channel blocker and an angiotensin receptor blocker used for treating hypertension. Azor® is available in the following strengths: 5mg/20mg, 5mg/40mg, 10mg/20mg, and 10mg/40mg.

**Bystolic®** (nebivolol) is a new beta-blocker approved for the treatment of hypertension. Bystolic® can be used alone or in combination with other antihypertension agents. The recommended starting dose is 5mg daily and can be increased up to 40mg daily. Some common adverse reactions are headache, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, and diarrhea. It is available in 2.5mg, 5mg, and 10mg strengths.

**Flector®** (diclofenac) is a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID) in the form of a transdermal patch. This patch is used for acute pain. Flector® is available in an 180mg transdermal patch.

### **NEW GENERIC MEDICATIONS**

**Trileptal®** (oxcarbazepine) is now a generic product. This tablet is available in 150mg, 300mg, and 600mg strengths.

**Protonix®** (pantoprazole), a proton pump inhibitor, is now available generically in 20mg and 40mg strengths.

**Zyrtec®** (cetirizine), an antihistamine, is now available as a generic and an over-the-counter (OTC) product. Zyrtec® is known to work quicker than Claritin® (loratadine), another OTC antihistamine, but it can also cause more drowsiness so caution should be advised.

### **Medication Error Prevention:**

#### **Abbreviations**

The abbreviations “BIW” and “TID” should not be used. These could very easily be mistaken for “BID” or “QID” and could possibly cause harm to the patient. “BIW” should be written out as “two times per week” and “TID” should be written out as “three times per week”.

#### **Sound-alike/Look-alike Drugs**

Always be on the alert for drugs that either sound or look-alike. This can be a common cause for medication errors. Similarity between drug names, either brand or generic, can cause confusion and lead to errors.

Examples:

- Carbamazepine / Oxcarbazepine
- Tegretol® / Trileptal®
- Codeine / Lodine®
- Prozac® / Prograf®

## Ask The Pharmacists

**QUESTION:** Should a fentanyl transdermal patch be prescribed to an opioid naïve patient?

**Answer:** No, fentanyl should only be used in patients who have tried other opioids for their pain and have not found any relief.

**QUESTION:** Why should a patient avoid heat when they are wearing a fentanyl transdermal patch?

**Answer:** Heat may cause an increased amount of drug to reach the blood. This could then cause life-threatening breathing problems or even death.

**QUESTION:** What paperwork is needed to safely and correctly fill a prescription for clozapine?

**Answer:** A prescription written for clozapine and bloodwork results showing the patient's white blood cell count (WBC) and absolute neutrophil count (ANC) levels are required. The pharmacists at Martella's Pharmacy must receive the bloodwork levels within 7 days of the blood being drawn. The WBC must be  $\geq 3500 \text{ mm}^3$  and the ANC must be  $\geq 2000 \text{ mm}^3$  in order for the prescription to be filled safely and correctly.

