Prescribing tip: 359
Date: 19th May 2022

Prescribing Tip For Information

Reminder of the risk of QT interval Prolongation with Citalopram and Escitalopram and recommended dose amendments

Several cases across the two CCGs have been noted where patients over the age of 65 are being prescribed citalopram or escitalopram at doses larger than recommended.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) released a Drug Safety Update in 2014 regarding the risk of QT interval prolongation with Citalopram and Escitalopram. Data showed the potential to prolong the QT interval was dose dependant. Elderly patients have a higher exposure due to age-related decline in metabolism and elimination and therefore, the maximum dose for both medicines are now restricted in patients older that 65 years of age, as shown below.

	Adults	Adults over 65	Adults with hepatic impairment
Citalopram	**40mg**	**20mg**	**20mg**
Escitalopram	**20mg**	**10mg**	**10mg**

Patients who are currently prescribed over the recommended daily doses should have their treatment reviewed.

Citalopram and escitalopram should not be used in patients with congenital long QT syndrome or known pre-existing QT interval prolongation.
Citalopram and escitalopram may also have an additive effect when given with other medications which prolong the QT interval and therefore, co-administration is contraindicated. Below are some examples of medicines which can prolong the QT interval:

- Class IA and III antiarrhythmics (e.g., amiodarone, dronedarone, quinidine)
- Antipsychotics (e.g., phenothiazine derivatives, pimozide, haloperidol)
- Tricyclic antidepressants
- Some antimicrobial agents (e.g., sparfloxacin, moxifloxacin, erythromycin IV, pentamidine, antimalaria treatment—particularly halofantrine)
- Some antihistamines (e.g., mizolastine)
- Some antiretrovirals (e.g., ritonavir, saquinavir, lopinavir)

A dose reduction should also be considered when citalopram and escitalopram are co-prescribed with medicines which can increase their plasma concentration, for instance some antiretroviral medications, omeprazole, and cimetidine. Details of specific interactions can be found in individual Summary of Product Characteristics.

To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 214302

If you have any suggestions for future topics to cover in our prescribing tips please contact Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net