

## Drug holidays for women with urinary incontinence/overactive bladder

### Prescribing tip for information

If conservative management for urinary incontinence is not effective, antimuscarinics should be offered along with regular review<sup>1</sup>. In practice, medication for urinary incontinence is often continued long term without review of effectiveness, adverse effects, or patients' perceptions of success.

**NICE recommends reviewing women who remain on long-term drug treatment for UI or OAB annually, or every 6 months if they are aged over 75<sup>1</sup>**

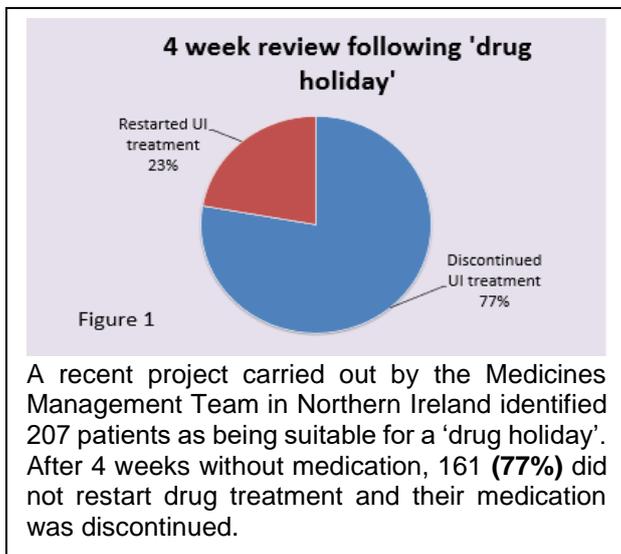
Complementing the advice from NICE, the BNF advises that: ***The need for continuing antimuscarinic drug therapy should be reviewed every 6-12 months<sup>2</sup>***

**Effectiveness:** Evidence suggests high rates of discontinuation with all OAB drugs because of adverse effects (dry mouth, drowsiness, blurred vision, constipation), and that benefits from medication are small, with fewer than 200 cases of continence achieved per 1000 treated<sup>3</sup>

**Safety:** There is a risk of anticholinergic load with OAB drugs and **long-term prescribing** of antimuscarinics (which includes anticholinergic drugs used to treat urinary incontinence) **is associated with an increased risk of falls, cognitive impairment, dementia and mortality<sup>4+5</sup>**

**Natural remission of UI can occur, with the average yearly remission rate lying somewhere between 5.7% and 27.8%<sup>6+7</sup>**

Based on the above it has been suggested that, where appropriate, women be encouraged to undertake a “drug holiday” from their medication to determine if there is a continuing need for treatment.



Throughout November your Medicines Optimisation Team will be undertaking a similar project locally across both CCGs, the results of which will be shared with practices in early 2021.

#### Advice for Prescribers:

For women with UI, clinicians should discuss the efficacy of the antimuscarinic drugs, the risks associated with long-term use, and regularly encourage anticholinergic drug holidays for short periods (normally 4 weeks) to assess

- effectiveness of drug treatment
- natural remission of the condition
- continued need

For further information about the project please speak to your practice Medicines Optimisation Pharmacist or Technician

#### References:

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To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 214302