Recent Patient Safety Concerns with Relvar Ellipta

In January 2015, GlaxoSmithKline re-launched Relvar Ellipta in the UK after changing the colour of the inhaler from blue to yellow following concerns about the potential for serious patient safety risks associated with the name and colour of Relvar Ellipta were first raised in February 2014. These concerns were shared throughout the UK respiratory patient and professional organisations.

Specific concerns surrounded the association of the colour blue as a reliever inhaler, and the similarity of the Relvar brand name to the term "reliever", which could cause confusion and lead to patients taking additional PRN doses resulting in significant side effects.

In recent weeks, a number of patients in the region have been dispensed a blue Relvar Ellipta sourced as a parallel import, and have taken it in addition to their usual yellow UK Relvar Ellipta.

Since there is a convention amongst UK healthcare professionals and patients for associating and describing reliever inhalers as a 'blue inhaler', the blue Relvar Ellipta device is not suitable for use in the UK. Consequently obtaining a parallel import of this blue Relvar Ellipta is strongly discouraged.

Pharmacy contractors should take steps to avoid obtaining Relvar Ellipta as a parallel import in the blue coloured device, and continue to supply Relvar as the yellow coloured device.

References

1. Anon. GlaxoSmithKline revises colour and labelling of Relvar Ellipta inhaler. The Pharmaceutical Journal, 20/27 December 2014, Vol 293, No 7841/2, online doi: 10.1211/PJ.2014.20067357