

This bulletin is intended to accompany **Issue 32** of **Kent & Medway CCG** Medicines Optimisation (MO) newsletter, dated 24/03/22. Please send all medicines queries relating to the articles written to: kmccg.medicinesoptimisation@nhs.net

MHRA Safety Update (February 2022)

Hydroxychloroquine, chloroquine: increased risk of cardiovascular events when used with macrolide antibiotics; reminder of psychiatric reactions

Carefully consider the benefits and risks before prescribing systemic azithromycin or other systemic macrolide antibiotics (erythromycin or clarithromycin) to patients being treated with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine. An observational study in patients with rheumatoid arthritis has shown that co-administration of azithromycin with hydroxychloroquine is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular events and cardiovascular mortality.

Advice for Practices:

- an observational study has shown that co-administration of azithromycin with hydroxychloroquine in patients with rheumatoid arthritis is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular events (including angina or chest pain and heart failure) and cardiovascular mortality
- carefully consider the benefits and risks before prescribing systemic azithromycin or other systemic macrolide antibiotics (erythromycin or clarithromycin) to patients being treated with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine
- if there is a clinical need to prescribe systemic macrolide antibiotics with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine, use caution in patients with risk factors for cardiac events and follow advice in the product information for each medicine
- be vigilant for psychiatric reactions associated with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine, especially in the first month of treatment; events have been reported in patients with no prior history of psychiatric disorders
- report suspected adverse drug reactions on a [Yellow Card](#)
- A search is currently being developed by the Medicines Optimisation Team to support this update and will be circulated shortly

Advice for Practices to give to patients and carers:

- some antibiotics (known as macrolides) taken by mouth or given as an injection at the same time as hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine have been associated with an increased risk of side effects that affect the heart
- seek urgent medical help if you have any signs of problems with your heart (for example, palpitations, fainting, chest pain, or unexplained breathlessness)
- some patients have also reported mental health symptoms when they started treatment with hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine
- speak to your doctor as soon as possible if you or your family members or caregivers notice any new or worsening mental health symptoms
- read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine (hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine) and keep it handy in case you need to read it again

COVID-19 antivirals: reporting to the UK COVID-19 Antivirals Pregnancy Registry

As the safety of COVID-19 antivirals in pregnancy has not been established, please report any pregnancies which occur during use of an antiviral, including paternal use, to the UK COVID-19 Antivirals Pregnancy Registry. This advice applies to molnupiravir (Lagevrio ▼), the combination of PF-07321332 (nirmatrelvir) plus ritonavir (Paxlovid ▼), and remdesivir (Veklury ▼).

COVID-19 vaccines and medicines: updates for February 2022

Recent information relating to COVID-19 vaccines and medicines that has been published since the January 2022 issue of Drug Safety Update, up to 11 February 2022.

Letters and medicine recalls sent to healthcare professionals in January 2022

A summary of recent letters, medicine recalls, and notifications sent to healthcare professionals.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in the newsletter is accurate and up to date at the time of publication. Please be aware that information about medicines and therapeutics will change over time, and that information may not be current after the initial date of publication. Please take note of the publication date and seek further advice if in any doubt about the accuracy of the information

The information contained in this newsletter is the best available from the resources at our disposal at the time. This newsletter is produced on behalf of K&M CCG. For all correspondence please contact the Medicines Optimisation team email: Kmccg.medicinesoptimisation@nhs.net