This Primary Care Briefing has been produced to inform healthcare professionals of the differences between different brands of modified release mesalazine tablets.

**Background**
Asacol MR, Ipocol (Urotir), Mesren MR, Mezavant XL, Pentasa and Salofalk are all modified release (MR) mesalazine tablet formulations licensed for the treatment of mild to moderate ulcerative colitis and maintenance of remission in ulcerative colitis. Asacol MR and Mesren MR are also licensed for maintenance of remission in Crohn's ileo-colitis. (1-9)

Asacol MR, Ipocol and Mesren MR are all similar in terms of formulation, optimal pH for drug release and site of drug release. Mezavant XL, Pentasa and Salofalk have slightly different formulations and optimal pH for drug release. In addition, Pentasa has a slightly different site of drug release. (2) The British National Formulary states that ‘the delivery characteristics of EC mesalazine preparations may vary; these preparations should not be considered interchangeable’. (1) Additional details on the formulation and pharmacokinetic details of each preparation can be found on the NeLM. (10)

A systematic review examining pharmacokinetic profiles concluded that systemic exposure to 5-aminosalicylate is comparable for Asacol 400mg MR, Pentasa and Salofalk. (11) A review of mesalazine MR formulations by the North Central London Formulary and Medicines Management Group in December 2009 could not find any significant disparity between Asacol MR and Mesren MR with regards to clinical, pharmaceutical, pharmacokinetic and manufacturing profile. (12) In a small clinical trial, Ipocol has been shown to be as safe and effective as Asacol 400mg MR, although there is some in vitro evidence of inequivalence between the 2 products. (13, 14) Mesren MR has not been compared to Asacol 400mg MR or other mesalazine MR preparations in patient studies because to obtain a licence as a generic medicine, the product only needs to demonstrate bioequivalence to the brand leader. (15)

**Costing**
There is some difference in acquisition cost and cost per dose between the various preparations and this is set out in table 1.

The British Society of Gastroenterology guidelines for management of inflammatory bowel disease do not differentiate between different brands of mesalazine. The guidelines state that efficacy with aminosalicylates may depend more on adherence with the prescribed dose than the delivery system. Mesalazine 2–4 g daily is considered to be effective first line therapy for mild to moderately active disease and oral mesalazine 1–2 g daily is considered as first line therapy for maintenance of remission. For maintenance of remission in Crohn’s ileo-colitis, mesalazine should be used in doses >2g/day. (16)

The incidence of UC is approximately 10–20 per 100,000 per year with an estimated prevalence of 100–200 per 100,000. The incidence of Crohn’s Disease is around 5–10 per 100,000 per year with an estimated prevalence of 50–100 per 100,000. (16)

**Implications for medicines management**
Preferential use of the most cost effective MR mesalazine preparations could result in potential savings. In a population of 100,000, using Mesren MR 400mg instead of Asacol MR 400mg or Ipocol 400mg [based on a dose of 2.4g/day] could save up to £57,000 annually.
Table 1 – Modified release mesalazine cost per tablet and indication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Cost per tablet</th>
<th>Indication &amp; daily dose</th>
<th>Cost per dose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asacol MR 400mg &amp; 800mg</td>
<td></td>
<td>Treatment of mild to moderate UC (2.4 - 4.8g) Maintenance of remission in UC &amp; Crohn’s ileocolitis (800mg - 2.4g)</td>
<td>£2.01 - £4.08 £0.67 - £2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipocol (Urotir) 400mg</td>
<td>35p</td>
<td>Treatment of mild to moderate UC (2.4g) Maintenance of remission in UC (1.2g - 2.4g)</td>
<td>£2.10 £1.05 - £2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesren MR 400mg</td>
<td>22p</td>
<td>Treatment of mild to moderate UC (2.4g) Maintenance of remission in UC &amp; Crohn’s ileocolitis (1.2g – 2.4g)</td>
<td>£1.32 £0.66 – £1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezavant XL 1200mg</td>
<td>£1.04</td>
<td>Treatment of mild to moderate UC (2.4 - 4.8g) Maintenance of remission in UC (2.4g)</td>
<td>£2.08 - £4.12 £2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentasa 500mg</td>
<td>24p</td>
<td>Treatment of mild to moderate UC (up to 4g) Maintenance of remission in UC (2g)</td>
<td>£1.94 £0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salofalk 250mg</td>
<td>16p</td>
<td>Treatment of mild to moderate UC (1.5g) Maintenance of remission in UC (750mg – 1.5g)</td>
<td>£0.97 £0.49 - £0.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NHS prices, February 2010

Reference List


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