

First Treatment for Serious Complications of Kidney Disease, Parathyroid Cancer

Patients who experience debilitating consequences of chronic kidney disease and parathyroid cancer now have a first-of-its-kind treatment option.

Sensipar (cinacalcet) was approved in March 2004 to treat secondary hyperparathyroidism in patients with chronic kidney disease who are on dialysis. In secondary hyperparathyroidism, elevated levels of parathyroid hormone are associated with changes in calcium and phosphorus metabolism, bone pain, fractures, and an increased risk for cardiovascular death.

The drug also was approved to treat hypercalcemia, an elevation in calcium levels in the blood, that results from a rare cancer of the parathyroid glands. Elevated levels of serum calcium can cause mental confusion, lethargy, dehydration, nausea, vomiting, constipation, and kidney damage.

Nearly all of the more than 300,000 kidney dialysis patients in the United States experience hyperparathyroidism.

Treatment with Sensipar, manufactured by Amgen Inc. of Thousand Oaks, Calif., lowers blood levels of

parathyroid hormone as well as the amount of calcium and phosphorus in the blood.

Faulty Patient Lifts Recalled

The FDA has announced that Moving Solutions Inc. of Downers Grove, Ill., is recalling its patient lifts because of a faulty design. Patient lifts are mechanical sling-like devices used in hospitals and nursing homes to move people from one place to another, as from a bed to a bath.

Excessive wear of the main bolt of Moving Solutions' lift causes the bolt to break. When that happens, the lift arm is no longer secured to the lift, and the patient will fall. The lift arm could also fall on the patient, which could result in serious injury and even death. The FDA has received one report of a death related to the failure of the bolt.

This recall involves all FAABORG model battery-operated patient lifts distributed by Moving Solutions. Some 856 lifts have been distributed throughout the United States. Facilities should stop using these lifts until the problem is corrected.

FAABORG, located in Denmark, is the manufacturer. Moving Solutions is

the initial U.S. distributor, though there may be other distributors.

Former FDA Commissioner Heads CMS

Former FDA Commissioner Mark B. McClellan, M.D., Ph.D., is the new administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Lester M. Crawford has been named acting FDA commissioner.

McClellan became the 18th Commissioner of Food and Drugs in November 2002. A native of Austin, Texas, McClellan was a professor, physician, and health care economist at Stanford University before moving to Washington, D.C., in 1998 to work in the Clinton administration.

McClellan, who became Medicare administrator on March 25, 2004, received his medical degree from the Harvard-Massachusetts Institute of Technology Division of Health Sciences and Technology in 1992. He received a doctorate in economics from MIT a year later.

McClellan replaces Thomas Scully, who resigned in December 2003. ■

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