

A new player the pain management market: Does Duexis® present new value?

Horizon Pharmaceuticals recently announced the FDA approval of Duexis®, a new pain management option for injured workers. This drug is actually a combination of two drugs, ibuprofen for pain and another for preventing ulcers and gastrointestinal side effects caused by the ibuprofen.

Specifically, Duexis® contains the anti-ulcer, H2-receptor antagonist (H2RA) drug famotidine, and the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) ibuprofen. This new drug is approved for the relief of signs and symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Because it contains famotidine, it's also approved for decreasing the risk of developing upper gastrointestinal (GI) ulcers in patients taking ibuprofen.

Duexis® prescribing literature contains a boxed warning. This warning is now required by the FDA for NSAIDs like ibuprofen. Its intent is to caution doctors about the risks associated with ibuprofen, including increased risk of serious cardiovascular and GI tract side effects.

So what is the value proposition of this new pain medication?

The AWP unit price of Duexis® at this writing is \$1.86, which corresponds to a three times daily consumption cost of \$5.58. Another similar combination pain and GI protection drug is Vimovo®, it was approved by the FDA in early 2010. Vimovo® is a combination of an NSAID (Naproxen) and an anti-ulcer proton pump inhibitor drug (Esomeprazole).

Although, it has a lower daily cost, Vimovo® is still not considered by the Cypress Care Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee to be an appropriate first-line treatment for injured workers. The combination of ibuprofen and famotidine in Duexis® is a relatively low cost option for physicians who prescribe for patients at risk of GI complications. However, it does not offer increased value with regard to cost or effectiveness.

An inherent disadvantage of Duexis® is that it's dosed three times per day. Vimovo may be given two times a day. The current AWP of Vimovo is \$1.86 per unit, so its daily consumption cost is only \$3.72 due to its twice a day dosing schedule. That said, significant prescribing of Duexis® and Vimovo® is expected from Workers' Compensation Physicians.

References:

Duexis®. Northbrook, IL: Horizon Pharma; April 2011.

Vimovo®. Wilmington, DE: Astra Zeneca; June 2011.

