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PHA Information Exchange Service

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ACE INHIBITORS: WARNING AGAINST USE IN ADVANCED PREGNANCY

United States of America. The Food and Drug Administration has announced that all angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors indicated for the treatment of hypertension will be required to carry a "boxed warning" regarding risks of exposure during the later stages of pregnancy.

Manufacturers are simultaneously distributing a "Dear Doctor" letter emphasizing that women who take this type of drug in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy risk causing significant harm to the fetus, including kidney failure and face or skull deformities. The manufacturers and products concerned are as follows:

Bristol-Myers Squibb	captopril (Capoten [®]), captopril + hydrochlorothiazide (Capozide [®]), fosinopril sodium (Monopril [®])
Ciba-Geigy	benazepril (Lotensin [®])
Hoechst-Roussel	ramipril (Altace [®])
ICI Pharmaceuticals	lisinopril (Zestril [®]), lisinopril + hydrochlorothiazide (Zestoretic [®])
Merck, Sharp & Dohme	enalapril maleate (Vasotec [®]), enalaprilat (Vasotec [®] IV), enalapril + hydrochlorothiazide (Vaseretic [®]), lisinopril (Prinivil [®]), lisinopril + hydrochlorothiazide (Prinzide [®])
Parke-Davis	quinapril (Accupril [®])

For several years labelling for these products has warned of these risks, but additional cases continue to be reported. More than 50 cases of fetal harm have been reported over the past several years. The warnings in the labelling are therefore being strengthened and highlighted by including a boxed warning and other changes.

No risk to the fetus appears to be associated with exposure to ACE inhibitors during the first trimester. Women who become pregnant while receiving an ACE inhibitor are advised not to stop treatment without first consulting their physician, because uncontrolled hypertension is dangerous to them and their fetus.

Pharmacists have also been alerted to this labelling change and will be asked to counsel women of childbearing age who are taking ACE inhibitors. They will also be provided with stickers to be placed directly on the prescription bottles that read: "If you become pregnant consult your doctor promptly about switching to a different drug".

Reference: HHS News P92-8, Food and Drug Administration, Rockville, USA, dated 13 March 1992.

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