



Press Release

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Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention
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First-line Oral Gonorrhea Treatment Available Again in United States

Drug broadens CDC-recommended gonorrhea treatment options

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) alerts health care providers to an additional option for treatment of urogenital and rectal gonorrhea – cefixime 400 milligram tablets. Cefixime is the only CDC-recommended oral treatment for this disease, and since 2002, it has not been available in tablet form. Cefixime tablets are again being distributed in the United States and available to clinicians as of this month for prescribing to patients.

Gonorrhea, one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases in the United States, has few treatment options. In April of last year, CDC updated its recommendations for gonorrhea treatment, no longer recommending fluoroquinolone antibiotics (ciprofloxacin, ofloxacin and levofloxacin), based on data indicating widespread drug resistance in the United States.

As a result, the only CDC-recommended options for treating gonorrhea are in a single class of antibiotics known as cephalosporins. Within this class, the only recommended drug treatment for all types of gonorrhea (urogenital, rectal and pharyngeal) is an injection form, ceftriaxone. However, for uncomplicated gonorrhea (gonorrhea that has not spread to the blood or central nervous system) of the cervix, urethra or rectum, CDC also recommends an alternative to ceftriaxone – an oral treatment option, cefixime. Since 2002 that drug has been available only as a suspension (liquid form), which limited its utility, since a suspension is not as convenient as a tablet.

“The availability of cefixime tablets this month will have tremendous impact in fighting gonorrhea,” said Kevin Fenton, M.D., director of CDC’s National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention. “This oral option expands a physician’s arsenal to combat this serious disease, while giving patients a drug that is easier to take.”

CDC continues to call for research and development on new drugs to combat gonorrhea, a disease that affects roughly 700,000 Americans each year. Even with a new tablet-form drug, cephalosporins remain the only class of drugs recommended by CDC for treatment of gonorrhea, making drug resistance a continued threat. Also, for pharyngeal (throat) infections, there is currently no oral alternative to ceftriaxone, which must be injected.

“While the renewed availability of a gonorrhea drug in tablet form marks progress, the reality is that many more options are needed to combat the spread of this disease,” said John Douglas, M.D., director of the Division of STD Prevention at CDC. “Continued development of new gonorrhea drugs is crucial to stay ahead of any drug resistance that could develop and severely affect treatment for the hundreds of thousands of Americans with this disease.”

Cefixime is FDA-approved and is sold under the brand name Suprax. The drug is provided in the U.S. by Lupin Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Baltimore, Md. Additional information on gonorrhea treatment options can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/2006/updated-regimens.htm>.

Gonorrhea is the second most commonly reported infectious disease in the United States, after chlamydia. To reduce this disease burden, CDC recommends that effective gonorrhea treatment and partner management be combined with targeted screening of populations at risk. Additionally, CDC continues to explore approaches to more effectively conduct surveillance for gonorrhea and associated complications such as pelvic inflammatory disease, as well as to monitor for emerging drug resistance. CDC also supports comprehensive STD prevention programs that promote abstinence from sexual activity among youth, encourage mutual monogamy with a partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected, and urge consistent and correct condom use.

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