

Dear VA Clinician:

On March 30, 2007, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a public health advisory informing patients and health care professionals that the marketing, sales and distribution of tegaserod (Zelnorm®) is to be suspended until further notice.

The FDA was notified by Novartis Pharmaceutical Corporation, manufacturer of tegaserod, that a retrospective safety analysis of the clinical database revealed a statistically significant imbalance in the incidence of CV ischemic events (MI, stroke, and unstable angina pectoris) in patients taking tegaserod compared to those taking placebo. The analyses included 29 clinical studies for the treatment of a variety of gastrointestinal tract conditions. The average age of patients in these studies was 43 years and the majority of the patients were women. The incidence of CV ischemic events occurred in 13 per 11,614 (0.11%) patients taking tegaserod compared to 1 patient per 7,031 (0.01%) taking placebo; p=0.024. Of the 13 patients treated with tegaserod; 4 had a heart attack with one fatality; 6 experienced severe chest pain resulting in a MI, and 3 had a stroke. The one patient taking placebo had symptoms suggestive of a stroke resulting in no residual complications. All patients affected had pre-existing CV disease and /or CV risk factors.

Tegaserod, a 5-HT₄ receptor agonist, is approved for short-term treatment in women with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) whose primary symptom is constipation. In August 2004, tegaserod received FDA approval for the treatment of chronic idiopathic constipation in both men and women below the age of 65. The FDA recognizes that in some patients for whom no other treatment options are available and in whom the benefits of tegaserod treatment outweigh the chance of serious side effect, the medication may be available as an investigational new drug application at a later date if the population of patients can be identified in whom the benefits of the drug outweigh the risk.

Please refer to the following links for additional information.

<http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/tegaserod.htm>

<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2007/NEW01597.html>

At this time, other pharmacologic treatments should be addressed with your local gastrointestinal providers. A letter of explanation is available for patients on the PBM website.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your VISN Formulary Leader or pharmacist at your facility.