

SAFETY MEMO 14

To: Directors of Pharmacy/Heads of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, HSC Trusts

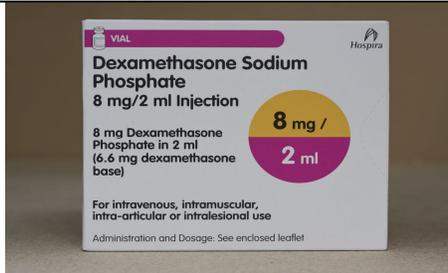
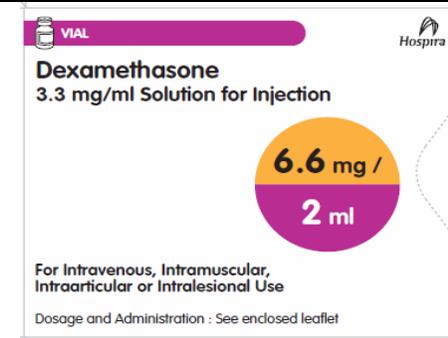
Cc: Dr N Morrow, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, DHSSPS
Mr J Brogan, Assistant Director Commissioning - Pharmacy and Medicines Management, HSC Board

From: Medicines Governance Team

Date: 8th July 2010

Re: Dexamethasone injection

Recent communication has been received from Hospira advising that the labelling of dexamethasone injection had changed. Both dexamethasone products from Hospira and Organon are now labelled with the strength expressed as the dexamethasone base. It should be noted that the two products have always been and continue to be different concentrations.

Product	Label	Dexamethasone base	dexamethasone phosphate
Hospira old labelling		6.6mg/2ml	8mg/2ml
Hospira new labelling		6.6mg/2ml	8mg/2ml
Organon		8mg/2ml	9.6mg/2ml

Equivalence calculated using dexamethasone 1mg = dexamethasone phosphate 1.2mg = dexamethasone sodium phosphate 1.3mg (BNF 59)

While both labels now express the dose as dexamethasone base, doses for adults in the BNF are expressed as dexamethasone phosphate. Doses in the BNF for children are expressed as either dexamethasone base or dexamethasone phosphate, depending on the indication.

Both products may be required for use depending on availability of supply or requirement for a latex free product. Therefore it is recommended that each product requires additional labelling to highlight the dexamethasone base and dexamethasone phosphate content to enable users to determine the correct quantity to administer.

Dexamethasone injection (Organon) Dexamethasone injection (Hospira)

Dexamethasone 4mg/1ml base is equivalent to 4.8mg/1ml dexamethasone phosphate

Dexamethasone 3.3mg/1ml base is equivalent to 4mg/1ml dexamethasone phosphate

Dexamethasone 8mg/2ml base is equivalent to 9.6mg/2ml dexamethasone phosphate

Dexamethasone 6.6mg/2ml base is equivalent to 8mg/2ml dexamethasone phosphate

In addition, prescribers should be requested to specify 'dexamethasone phosphate' or 'dexamethasone base' when prescribing dexamethasone. Pharmacists should endorse prescriptions where this is not specified.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your Medicines Governance Pharmacist.