Montelukast (Singulair)

Labeling Updates by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

- **Warning (2008):** Risk of neuropsychiatric events associated with montelukast, including suicidal thoughts or actions.
- **Boxed Warning (2020):** Prescribers should avoid using montelukast for patients with mild symptoms, particularly those with allergic rhinitis. A requirement to supply patients with a new Medication Guide containing this warning to be given to patients with each new montelukast prescription was added.
    - While the FDA acknowledged that the new data regarding the risk of mental health side effects with montelukast are limited, they ultimately determined that montelukast should not be the first choice for treatment (particularly with mild allergic rhinitis) due to these potential risks, as well as the wide availability of other safe and effective therapies.
    - Additionally, the FDA was concerned that many health care professionals and patients are not currently aware of montelukast's risks of mental health side effects despite the previously existing warnings.

A copy of the wording from the boxed warning on the prescribing information for Singulair can be found below (references to other parts of the prescribing information have been removed):

Serious neuropsychiatric (NP) events have been reported with the use of SINGULAIR. The types of events reported were highly variable, and included, but were not limited to, agitation, aggression, depression, sleep disturbances, suicidal thoughts and behavior (including suicide). The mechanisms underlying NP events associated with SINGULAIR use are currently not well understood.

Because of the risk of NP events, the benefits of SINGULAIR may not outweigh the risks in some patients, particularly when the symptoms of disease may be mild and adequately treated with alternative therapies. Reserve use of SINGULAIR for patients with allergic rhinitis who have an inadequate response or intolerance to alternative therapies. In patients with asthma or exercise-induced bronchoconstriction, consider the benefits and risks before prescribing SINGULAIR.

Discuss the benefits and risks of SINGULAIR with patients and caregivers when prescribing SINGULAIR. Advise patients and/or caregivers to be alert for changes in behavior or new NP symptoms when taking SINGULAIR. If changes in behavior are observed, or if new NP symptoms or suicidal thoughts and/or behavior occur, advise patients to discontinue SINGULAIR and contact a healthcare provider immediately.

Recommendations for Montelukast Use

- All patients prescribed montelukast should be counseled on these risks and urged to report any new neurologic or psychiatric symptoms that they experience while on the medication to their provider.
- To ensure that the FDA can continue to evaluate safety risks of this medication, health care providers and patients should report experienced side effects from montelukast to the FDA's MedWatch program, which can be found at www.fda.gov/safety/medwatch-fda-safety-information-and-adverse-event-reporting-program/reporting-serious-problems-fda

References:

1. *FDA Requires Stronger Warning About Risk of Neuropsychiatric Events Associated with Asthma and Allergy Medication Singulair and Generic Montelukast [Press Release]. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration. March 04, 2020. Retrieved from https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-requires-stronger-warning-about-risk-neuropsychiatric-events-associated-asthma-and-allergy*
2. *Singulair (montelukast) [prescribing information]. Whitehouse Station, NJ: Merck and Co, Inc; April 2020.*