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Alfentanil Spray (Alfentanil 'cutaneous solution')

We have been using alfentanil spray either nasally or buccally on the in-patient unit at St Christophers for some time now for 'incident pain'. Alfentanil is a lipophilic opioid, so is absorbed through the skin and reaches the circulation rapidly. It also has a short duration of action and this makes it ideal for situations where patients experience sudden, short increases of pain, perhaps due to movement or in association with procedures. Some small studies have been carried out on the use of fentanyl in similar circumstances (Zeppetella G, 2000, 2001) but many palliative care units are now using alfentanil, as the volume required is smaller. Torbay Hospital Pharmacy has developed a product following requests, particularly from Palliative Care Units wishing to use alfentanil sublingually and intranasally.

This product is only suitable for patients already using opioids for pain and any co-existing oral or nasal condition may need to be considered by the prescriber. Each spray of the pump delivers 0.14mg in 0.14ml. The starting dose is 1 –2 sprays onto the inside of the cheek or into the nostrils, but this has been increased to 4, 6 or 8 sprays if necessary. Separate sheets are available, which contain a) details of assembly and use of the spray b) instructions for ordering and recording on a ward and c) a Patient Information Leaflet.

This preparation may be prescribed by GP on an FP10 but needs to be ordered by a community pharmacist by faxing an order or copy of an FP10 to Torbay Hospital. One bottle costs £7.90 (including carriage) at current prices. There is now a minimum order charge of £25. Please be aware that orders are sent by standard post and can take up to 5 working days between ordering and receipt. If an urgent delivery is necessary there is an additional charge of £10.40 for this.

Torbay Hospital Manufacturing Unit tel: 01803 664707 Fax: 01803 664354

References

1. Zeppetella G. Sublingual fentanyl citrate for cancer-related breakthrough pain: a pilot study. Palliative Medicine Jul 2001, 15(4) 323-8
2. Zeppetella G. An assessment of the safety, efficacy and acceptability of intranasal fentanyl citrate in the management of cancer –related breakthrough pain: a pilot study. JPSM 2000, 20(4) 253-8
3. Zeppetella G. Nebulised and intranasal fentanyl in the management of cancer-related breakthrough pain. Palliative Medicine Jan 2000, 14(1) 57-8