Safety Alert 002/21

Urgent stock preservation of tocilizumab injections for COVID-19 patients required

31 August 2021

Distributed to:

- Chief Executives
- Directors of Clinical Governance
- Director, Regulation and Compliance Unit

Action required by:

- Chief Executives
- Directors of Clinical Governance

We recommend you also inform:

- Drug and Therapeutics Committees
- Directors of Medical Services
- Directors of Pharmacy
- Directors and Managers of Intensive Care Units
- Directors and Managers of Respiratory Services
- Directors and Managers of Infectious Diseases
- Directors and Managers of Rheumatology

Deadline for completion of action – 2 September 2021.

Expert Reference Group

Content reviewed by:

- Chief Pharmacist Unit
- Clinical Leads of ICU, ID and Respiratory Communities of Practice
- HealthShare NSW
- State Preparedness and Response Branch

Clinical Excellence Commission

Tel: 02 9269 5500

Fax: 02 9269 5599

Email: CEC-MedicationSafety@health.nsw.gov.au

Internet Website: http://health.nsw.gov.au/sabs

Intranet Website: http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs

Review date

January 2022

Situation

- A critical disruption to the supply of multiple presentations of tocilizumab injections was communicated in Safety Alert 001/21 on 9 August 2021.
- Due to increasing demand for this treatment and delays in obtaining additional supply, further stock preservation strategies must be instituted immediately to ensure optimal usage of the limited available stock.
- NSW Health is continuing to explore options for sourcing additional supply of tocilizumab injection. Future delivery dates of stock remain uncertain.

Clinical and governance recommendations

Baricitinib oral tablet

- Baricitinib **must** be used preferentially as an immunomodulatory medicine for the treatment of COVID-19, unless unsuitable (see below). Clinicians are assured that there is a steady supply of baricitinib available via HealthShare NSW.
- Baricitinib oral tablet formulation can be dispersed to allow for administration via nasogastric or gastrostomy tube. See NSW Therapeutic Advisory Group (TAG) Guideline for more information.

Tocilizumab injection

- Drug and Therapeutics Committees must ensure that a process is in place so that the use of tocilizumab in the treatment of COVID-19 within their facility meets the below criteria.

  The patient:
  - requires direct admission from community or Emergency Department to ICU for mechanical ventilation, OR
  - is pregnant or breastfeeding requiring supplemental oxygen, OR
  - is a child or adolescent (< 16 years of age) requiring supplemental oxygen.

  AND
  - Only a **SINGLE DOSE** of tocilizumab is used in the above patients.

  AND
  - Tocilizumab should **NOT** be administered to patients that have already commenced or completed a course of baricitinib.

General

- Clinicians must seek approval from the Drug and Therapeutics Committee prior to administering tocilizumab for the treatment of COVID-19.
- Clinicians are reminded to follow correct procedures if there is intention to use a medicine for any indication other than those listed in the TGA-approved product information.
- Baricitinib, remdesivir, sotrovimab and limited tocilizumab supply for COVID-19 treatment must be ordered through the HealthShare NSW stockpile.

Actions required by Local Health Districts/Networks

1. **Immediately upon receipt**, distribute this Safety Alert to all relevant clinicians/ committees.
2. **Within 24 hours**, acknowledge receipt of this Safety Alert and confirm distribution.
3. **Within 48 hours**, confirm that the Drug and Therapeutics Committee has a process in place to ensure that each request for tocilizumab in the treatment of COVID-19 complies with the abovementioned criteria.
4. Facilities to continue submitting data on usage of tocilizumab for COVID-19 patients with requests for additional supply from the HealthShare NSW stockpile.
5. Escalate concerns that are not able to be managed locally to CEC-MedicationSafety@health.nsw.gov.au