

From the 39th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists

Palonosetron: enhanced patient care and significant savings

Patients who fail prophylaxis for chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CINV) are six times more likely to develop extreme events in later cycles. At the recent American Society of Health-System Pharmacists meeting in Orlando, Florida, researchers reported promising results on the first 5-HT₃ receptor-antagonist to be FDA-approved for the prevention of acute and delayed CINV after moderately emetogenic chemotherapy (MEC).

A team of research scientists from University Pharmacotherapy Associates LLC, of Monroeville, Pennsylvania, MGI PHARMA Inc., of Bloomington, Minnesota, and the University of Pittsburgh presented

data on palonosetron (Aloxi).

Using palonosetron in the first cycle of MEC results in a reduction in extreme events, enhances patient care, and represents significant savings for payers, they said. They called it a “cost-effective strategy from the payer perspective compared to first generation 5-HT₃ receptor antagonists.”

The authors, led by Gordon J. Vanscoy, PharmD, of University Pharmacotherapy Associates, conducted a pharmacoeconomic analysis of palonosetron. They compared it with granisetron (Kytril), ondansetron (Zofran), and dolasetron (Anzemet).

Extreme events were reduced by 48% with 0.25 mg of palonosetron, compared with the first-generation

5-HT₃ drugs. With adjustments for equivalent dexamethasone use, extreme events were reduced by 64%.

In comparing palonosetron with the other drugs, palonosetron’s number-needed-to-treat to prevent one extreme event was 16. Adjusting for dexamethasone use, the number was 13. That is well within the accepted range routinely reimbursed by payers, the researchers said.

The authors—one of whom is an employee of MGI PHARMA, the maker of palonosetron—concluded that future pharmacoeconomic studies should examine the impact of CINV on emergency room visits, hospitalization rates, caregiver burden, and patient productivity.