



ABSOLUTE SCOOP

DID YOU KNOW?

A Black Box Warning for Montelukast was issued by the FDA in March of 2020 after serious neuropsychiatric events were reported with its use.



BLACK BOX WARNING



DEPRESCRIBING MONTELUKAST (SINGULAIR)

Written by Courtney Suggett, PharmD, BCGP, Consultant Pharmacist

Approximately 12 million people in the United States were prescribed Montelukast in 2022, despite the medication carrying a Black Box Warning for neuropsychiatric events. Montelukast is a Leukotriene Receptor Antagonist approved by the FDA in 1998 for treating asthma, allergic rhinitis, and exercise induced bronchoconstriction.

A Black Box Warning for Montelukast was issued by the FDA in March of 2020 after serious neuropsychiatric events were reported with its use. The types of events reported were highly variable and included, but were not limited to: agitation, aggression, depression, sleep disturbances, and suicidal thoughts and behavior (including suicide). Onset of these troubling symptoms ranged from hours to years after beginning the medication. Psychiatric adverse reactions have been reported with Montelukast in patients with and without a history of psychiatric illness.

With the on-going emphasis and scrutiny related to psychotropic use, it is prudent to eliminate medications, like Montelukast, that may be precipitating the need for a psychotropic medication. Upon reviewing the medication use of skilled nursing residents in Ohio, it was found that 52% are currently taking an antidepressant and 23% are taking an anxiolytic. Adding or continuing Montelukast in these residents, specifically, increases the risk of worsening their underlying psychiatric conditions.

One study found 35% of patients discontinued Montelukast use within the first 30 days of taking the medication. The mechanism of the neuropsychiatric events associated with Montelukast use are currently not well understood, which makes the decision to prescribe Montelukast such an important one. The risks and benefits of treatment should be weighed before initiating the medication and also periodically during treatment. Patients and caregivers should be on the lookout for changes in behavior or new psychiatric symptoms with Montelukast therapy. If changes in behavior or psychiatric symptoms are observed, contact the prescriber immediately.

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Even if a long-term care resident has been on Montelukast therapy without issue, the medication should be evaluated for necessity as the trigger for prescribing may no longer be a factor in a long-term care facility (such as environmental allergies or exercise induced bronchoconstriction). When treating allergic rhinitis, reserve Montelukast for those who have an inadequate response or intolerance to alternative therapies, such as second-generation antihistamines (Loratadine, Cetirizine, etc.).

A trial discontinuation of Montelukast may be attempted without tapering the medication and without adding any additional routine or PRN medications. If you have questions about deprescribing Montelukast or deprescribing, in general, please don't hesitate to reach out to your clinical consultant pharmacist.

References:

Montelukast (Lexi-Drugs) - UpToDate® Lexidrug™

Asthma Drug Still Being Prescribed to Kids Despite Potential Mental Health Risks | Scientific American

Commonly prescribed asthma drug, Singulair, linked to mental side effects

Early Discontinuation of Montelukast Treatment; A Danish Nationwide Utilization Study - PubMed

About the Author



Outside of work, Courtney enjoys camping and spending time with her husband, two small children, and their chocolate lab.

Courtney Suggett, PharmD, BCGP is a Clinical Consultant Pharmacist. Courtney is a graduate of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. She started her career at Absolute Pharmacy in the spring of 2018, beginning in operations then transitioning into consulting in 2020. She also achieved a board certification in geriatrics in 2020. Courtney is passionate about deprescribing medications and helping facilities achieve positive clinical outcomes for their residents. Courtney is known for being approachable, personable, and always ready to lend a helping hand!

What's the most romantic ship?

Courtship.



What did Hans Solo say to Princess Leia on Valentine's Day?

Yoda one for me.