

A-Detail™ Fact Sheet (Canada)

Isotretinoin (Accutane®)

Overview

Isotretinoin is a retinoid (vitamin A-derived) drug that has been available in North America since the early 1980's for treating acne. Marketed by Roche under the name Accutane®, it is an essential tool in treating acne that scars, as well as severe or persistent acne.

Clinical Experience

Isotretinoin is approved for severe, recalcitrant nodular cystic acne unresponsive to other first-line therapies; it is also used for moderate acne and other indications including rosacea and Grover's Disease. Dermatologists are now using Isotretinoin earlier in the acne process to reduce both the psychological burden of chronic acne and also to prevent permanent scarring. Patient selection, strict adherence to pregnancy prevention and close monitoring of patients while on Isotretinoin make the treatment a relatively safe experience.

Patient Profiles

Suitable candidates include patients with inflammatory acne that has the potential to scar and where there are no obvious contra-indications. Unsuitable candidates include patients with

- comedones only
- significant hepatic or renal disease
- PABA allergy (the 10mg caps do not contain PABA and may be used in place of the 40mg caps for these patients)
- depression (these patients need close monitoring and possible co-management with a mental health professional. Some patients have experienced improvement in mood subsequent to successful treatment outcome.)
- pretreatment elevation in liver function tests or triglycerides.

Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or of childbearing age and unwilling to comply with mandatory contraceptive measures are also unsuitable candidates.

Dosing

Initial oral dosing of 40mg daily for 2-4 weeks is recommended. Maintenance doses are 1mg/kg per day.

Efficacy

A minimum total cumulative dose of 120mg/kg is generally required. Many dermatologists treat until the patient is clinically clear resulting in total cumulative doses of 120-150mg. Forty percent of patients respond to initial therapy and do not require any further anti-acne treatment. Twenty percent keep acne under control with topical therapy only and 20 percent of patients need a further course of treatment. Adult onset acne in women appear to relapse more often.

Side Effects, Risks, Compliance & Monitoring

Side Effects

Common side effects include dry lips and skin, dry itchy eyes, photosensitivity, fatigue and headaches.

Risks

Accutane is teratogenic and causes fetal abnormalities. Other possible risks include osteoporosis, pseudotumor in the cerebrum, depression and higher cholesterol or triglyceride levels. A direct link to teen suicide is controversial and a firm link has not been fully established.

Compliance

To ensure proper compliance, patients must be informed of the risks and benefits of the treatment. It is important to communicate the possibility of the transient exacerbation of acne. Side effects should be actively managed and the dose can be temporarily lowered if needed.

Monitoring

Patients should be monitored for lipids, CBC, cholesterol, triglycerides, ALT and AST. Two negative pregnancy tests must be completed prior to therapy and monthly prior to renewing the prescription. Ensure that the drug is being taken with fatty food to enhance drug absorption.

A-Details™ "An Online Academic Drug Presentation Written By Drs. for Drs."

The content is third party, academic-based and includes clinical evidence and practical experience. View the complete A-Detail™ for Accutane® and other drugs at www.SkinCareGuide.ca or www.AcneGuide.ca.

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