



Antidote Update: Protopam® Shortage at Manufacturer Level

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The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) has been receiving calls from health care facilities regarding a shortage of Protopam® at the manufacturer level. Protopam® (pralidoxime chloride), also known as 2-PAM, is an essential antidote in the management of poisonings by organophosphate insecticides (OPI) and nerve agents (e.g., sarin, soman, tabun and VX).

For many years, Wyeth was the sole manufacturer of Protopam®, which is available in one-gram vials. In November of 2003, the customer service department of Wyeth stated that the product was out of stock and no new release date was set. In early January, 2004, the company explained that this product line was sold to Baxter, Inc. in August, 2003. A representative of Baxter stated that the product is unavailable now and is on back-order. There is no known release date.

Local, state and federal weapons of mass destruction antidote stockpiles (e.g., the Strategic National Stockpile) contain large amounts of 2-PAM in one-gram vials and 600 milligram auto-injectors. Meridian Medical Technologies Inc. produces a pralidoxime chloride 600 mg/2 ml military-style auto-injector; however, this product is not available for distribution to hospital pharmacies through routine pharmaceutical procurement channels. This stock is intended for emergency use involving a mass casualty incident. There may be significant difficulty in obtaining 2-PAM from these sources for incidents involving OPI poisoning caused by accidental pediatric ingestions, suicidal overdoses or occupational agricultural exposures.

Hospital pharmacy managers are urged not to relinquish any stock of Protopam®, even if it is approaching or may have reached the labeled expiration date, until new product has been received. The product's shelf life is 60 months post-manufacture; however, there is no product stability information for expired stock. Additionally, pharmacists should identify their nearest alternative source of pralidoxime chloride for rapid procurement should a serious OPI-poisoned patient present to the hospital emergency department.

Pharmacists may obtain more information about antidote preparedness for nuclear, biological and chemical events by reviewing "Pharmacy preparedness for incidents involving weapons of mass destructions" (American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy; December 1, 2001, Volume 58, Number 23, p. 2274-2284). An IPC-suggested antidote list for 27 poison antidotes and 10 adjunctive agents is available on its Web site, www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org, in the *Information for Health Professionals* section. Pharmacists can reach the IPC 24 hours a day at 1-800-222-1222 for any toxicology-related concerns.