

New Drug Alerts

Nucynta™ (tapentadol)

Onsolis™ (fentanyl citrate)

Ryzolt™ (tramadol extended-release)

Nucynta™ (tapentadol) **Opioid analgesic**

Developed by Pricara, Division of Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Nucynta™ (tapentadol) became available in June 2009 after news from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) that the new pain reliever would be classified as a Schedule-II controlled substance. Nucynta was originally approved in November 2008; however, a decision to categorize the new analgesic as a controlled substance delayed the release until mid 2009.

Similar to tramadol (Ultram®) products, Nucynta works via a dual mechanism of action to relieve pain, but it cannot be substituted for these products. Nucynta is the first short-acting agent in this class of pain relievers designated as a controlled substance. Examples of other short-acting opioid analgesics include immediate-release oxycodone and hydrocodone/acetaminophen products. According to clinical trials performed by the manufacturer, Nucynta is as effective as oxycodone 10 mg at relieving pain in post-operative patients, likely leading to the pain reliever's CII classification. AWP data indicates nearly a four-fold increase in cost for this agent compared to oxycodone 10 mg (\$2.13 versus \$0.55, respectively).

Research indicates that Nucynta may cause less drug-related side effects such as nausea and vomiting which are common in most opioid pain relievers. Nucynta is currently FDA indicated for the treatment of moderate to severe pain and is currently available in a short-acting formulation in 50 mg, 75 mg, and 100 mg strength tablets, and has a maximum daily dose of 600 mg. Clinical trials are currently being conducted to test a long-acting formulation of this agent. *It is anticipated that Nucynta will have a significant impact on opioid prescribing patterns as prescribers become familiar with it.*

Onsolis™ (fentanyl citrate) **Opioid analgesic**

Released in mid-October 2009, Onsolis™ became the third addition to the orally administered fentanyl citrate products currently on the U.S. market for the treatment of cancer-related breakthrough pain. Similar to Actiq® and Fentora® which have been approved since 1998 and 2006 respectively, Onsolis was approved for the treatment of breakthrough pain in cancer patients who use other opioid pain relievers on a continuous basis and are considered opioid tolerant.

Utilizing the manufacturer's patented BioErodible MucoAdhesive (BEMA™) system, Onsolis is available as a 200 mcg, 400 mcg, 600 mcg, 800 mcg, and 1,200 mcg strength dissolvable film intended for placement on the inner cheek. As a result of the Food and Drug Administration Amendment Act that was enacted in March 2009, BioDelivery Sciences International, Inc. was required to develop a risk mitigation program to help deter fraud and abuse by requiring prescribers, dispensing pharmacies, and patients to enroll in the company's Full Ongoing Commitment to User Safety (FOCUS™) program. As part of this program, the manufacturer agreed to provide educational support to registered prescribers and pharmacies, as well as provide a counseling call to first-time users to ensure proper utilization. Furthermore, only registered pharmacies would be permitted to fill prescriptions for Onsolis which in turn would be sent directly to the patient's home. Currently, Onsolis is the only fentanyl citrate product that has incorporated a Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) as part of its approval process. It is anticipated that other fentanyl citrate products (i.e., Actiq, Fentora) will soon be required to develop similar risk mitigation programs as well in an effort to reduce inappropriate utilization of these agents.

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PMSI continues to monitor the use of many opioid and non-opioid pain relievers in an effort to ensure appropriate utilization in the workers' compensation market. Through our MedAssess™ program, we will continue to be vigilant in assessing and addressing concerns regarding changes in analgesic utilization trends.



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As of 2008, fentanyl citrate products ranked ninth in terms of total spend and were responsible for 3.5 % of workers' compensation related drug spend and 0.1% of total transactions. BioDelivery Sciences International predicts that Onsolis may soon account for \$700 million, or 2.3%, of the \$30 billion spent annually on pain medications in the overall market. *The introduction of Onsolis is expected to expand the fentanyl citrate market; however, it remains to be seen whether Onsolis will replace Actiq or Fentora's market share in the treatment of chronic pain. Due to the presence of other rapid acting opioid analgesics on the market, it is expected that the introduction of Onsolis will not provide any significant clinical advantages over existing fentanyl citrate products.*

Ryzolt™ (tramadol extended-release) Opioid analgesic

Labopharm, Inc. announced the introduction of Ryzolt™ (tramadol extended release), the company's new long-acting analgesic which was released in May 2009. This once-daily formulation of tramadol is marketed for the treatment of moderate to moderately-severe pain in patients requiring chronic pain management. Similar to

Ultram ER, Ryzolt is intended to provide around-the-clock, baseline pain relief via a dual mechanism of action. Labopharm indicates that its patented Contramid™ time-release technology provides both immediate-release and extended-release properties supposedly leading to a more rapid onset of pain control. Because it has a different mechanism of release, Ryzolt will not be considered a generic equivalent to Ultram ER, another long-acting tramadol formulation. Although clinical trials have been conducted comparing the efficacy and duration of pain relief between Ryzolt and immediate-acting tramadol, there is a lack of clinical data comparing Ryzolt to Ultram ER. It is expected that the introduction of Ryzolt will likely not offer any additional pain relief benefits over existing long-acting tramadol formulations. Ryzolt is currently available in 100 mg, 200 mg, and 300 mg tablet form, and is not considered a controlled substance.

As of 2008, Ultram ER was responsible for approximately 1% of pharmacy transactions and spend in workers' compensation. *Due to the expected lack of clinical benefit of Ryzolt over Ultram ER, it is anticipated that this agent will not drive any significant changes in workers' compensation pharmacy spend.*

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