CEDAC Final Recommendation and Reasons for Recommendation
Plain Language Version

Aprepitant (Emend™ — Merck Frosst Canada Ltd.)
Indication — Prevention of Nausea and Vomiting due to Cancer Chemotherapy

The information contained within this plain language version of the Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee (CEDAC) Final Recommendation and Reasons for Recommendation about this drug is based on the information found within the corresponding technical version of the CEDAC Final Recommendation and Reasons for Recommendation. Health care professionals and those requiring more detailed information are advised to refer to the technical version.

Drug
Aprepitant is commonly known as Emend™. Emend, used in combination with other medications for nausea and vomiting such as Zofran®, Kytril® or Anzemet®, and dexamethasone (a type of steroid), is approved by Health Canada to prevent nausea and vomiting caused by certain drugs used to treat cancer (called chemotherapy) that are highly likely to cause these symptoms. It is also approved to prevent nausea and vomiting in women who use certain chemotherapy that is moderately likely to cause nausea and vomiting.

Dosage Form and Dose
Emend is available in 80 mg and 125 mg capsules. The recommended dose of Emend is 125 mg one hour before chemotherapy and 80 mg once each day for the two days following chemotherapy.

CEDAC Recommendation
CEDAC recommended that Emend be listed for coverage by Canada's publicly funded drug plans for use in combination with Zofran, Kytril or Anzemet together with dexamethasone, to prevent nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy that is highly likely to cause nausea and vomiting in patients who have already experienced vomiting with previous chemotherapy, even though they were treated with medications such as Zofran, Kytril or Anzemet, together with dexamethasone.

Reasons for the Recommendation

- Emend has been shown to reduce vomiting, but it does not consistently improve nausea in patients who are being treated with the types of chemotherapy that are highly likely to cause nausea and vomiting.
- Whether or not Emend offers good value to the publicly funded drug plans depends on how other drugs to prevent nausea and vomiting are used — how much, how often, and for how long. For that reason CEDAC recommends that Emend be used only if other treatments such as Zofran, Kytril or Anzemet together with dexamethasone, do not work well enough for patients receiving chemotherapy.
- Some types of chemotherapy are less likely to cause nausea and vomiting. Taking Emend when receiving these types of chemotherapy has not been shown to offer good value to publicly funded drug plans.

Summary of CEDAC Considerations

- CEDAC looked at four studies of Emend. Three studies included patients treated with chemotherapy that is highly likely to cause nausea and vomiting. One study was of women treated with chemotherapy that is moderately likely to cause nausea and vomiting.
- In all of the studies, patients were either given a placebo (a capsule that contained no active medicine) or they were given Emend, together with other drugs used to treat nausea and vomiting (Zofran and dexamethasone). Emend or placebo was given on the day the patients received their chemotherapy and for two days after chemotherapy.
- The studies looked to see if patients had nausea and vomiting at any time after their chemotherapy (from immediately after chemotherapy to five days after chemotherapy).
- In the three studies of patients treated with chemotherapy that is highly likely to cause nausea and vomiting, they found that patients who took Emend were less likely to have vomited and to have needed other drugs (“rescue therapy”) for their nausea and vomiting at any time after their chemotherapy.
- Two of the studies looked at the quality of life of patients being treated with chemotherapy. The studies found that in patients taking Emend, nausea and vomiting were less likely to affect their quality of daily life than in patients not taking Emend.
- In the one study of women treated with chemotherapy that is moderately likely to cause nausea and vomiting, there were no real differences in the number of patients without nausea or those requiring other medications, whether the women were taking Emend or placebo. At any time after chemotherapy, women receiving Emend experienced less vomiting.
- Treatment with Emend was not shown to cause any serious health problems compared to treatment with placebo.
- Emend costs $90.54 for three days of treatment. Because Emend is added to other drugs already used to prevent nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy (instead of replacing them), Emend increases the cost of treatment.

Background

The Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee (CEDAC) is a committee of the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH). The Committee is made up of drug evaluation

experts and public members. CEDAC provides recommendations about whether or not drugs should be listed for coverage through the participating publicly funded drug plans; however, the individual drug plans make their own decision about whether or not to cover a drug.

In making its recommendations, CEDAC decides if the drug under review ought to be covered by the participating public drug plans based on an evidence-informed review of the medication's effectiveness and safety, and based on an assessment of its cost-effectiveness in comparison with other available treatments.

The CEDAC Final Recommendation and Reasons for Recommendation neither takes the place of a medical professional providing care to a particular patient, nor is it intended to replace professional advice. CADTH is not legally responsible for any damages arising from the use or misuse of any information contained in or implied by the contents of this document.

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The manufacturer has reviewed this document and has not requested the deletion of any confidential information.