

Escitalopram

Product:

ESCITALOPRAM (Cipralextm)
10mg, 20mg tablet

Class of drugs:

Antidepressant

Indication:

Treatment of major depressive disorder (MDD)

Manufacturer:

Lundbeck Canada Inc.

CED Recommendation

The CED recommended that escitalopram (Cipralextm) not be funded, on the basis that escitalopram (Cipralextm) has not been shown to provide any therapeutic advantage over existing alternatives and it is more expensive.

Executive Officer Decision

Based on the CED recommendation and a subsequent pricing agreement, the Executive Officer decided to list escitalopram (Cipralextm) on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary as a General Benefit.

Status

Funding available through the Ontario Public Drug Programs.

Highlights of Recommendation:

- ◆ Escitalopram (Cipralextm) is used to treat a form of depression called major depressive disorder (MDD).
- ◆ Escitalopram (Cipralextm) belongs to a class of antidepressants called selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and is very similar to citalopram. Citalopram is listed on the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) Formulary and is considered a standard therapy for MDD.
- ◆ Most of the clinical studies did not show a significant difference between escitalopram (Cipralextm) and citalopram in effectiveness or side effects.
- ◆ Escitalopram (Cipralextm) costs \$1.55 to \$1.65 per day, compared to \$0.625 for citalopram.
- ◆ **Overall, the Committee noted that escitalopram (Cipralextm) has not been shown to provide any therapeutic advantage over standard treatments for MDD, such as citalopram.** Therefore, the CED recommended that escitalopram (Cipralextm) not be recommended for listing in the ODB Formulary.
- ◆ The Ministry subsequently negotiated a reduced price for escitalopram (Cipralextm).

Background:

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is the most common form of clinical depression, affecting 13-17% of the population. There are many possible symptoms of MDD, including feelings of emptiness, loss of interest or pleasure, change in appetite and sleep patterns, and even thoughts of suicide and death. MDD is a disabling condition resulting in deteriorating personal relationships, loss of motivation and poor performance at work. It can last for varying periods of time.

Selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are standard treatment for MDD. SSRIs are considered safer and better tolerated compared with older antidepressant medications, such as tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs). Currently, there are several antidepressant medications available on the ODB Formulary.

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Detailed Discussion:

- ◆ Escitalopram (Cipralext) is the S-enantiomer of the racemic compound citalopram. The S-enantiomer is considered the active component of the racemate.
- ◆ All published clinical trials compared escitalopram (Cipralext) 10-20mg daily versus citalopram 20-40mg daily. The proportion of subjects achieving remission at study endpoint was not significantly different between escitalopram (Cipralext) and citalopram in any of these studies. Comparisons of quality of life, response time, suicide rates, and days of disability were not investigated or reported.
- ◆ One randomized controlled trial involving patients with severe depression reported a statistically significant greater reduction in symptoms using the Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS) favouring the escitalopram (Cipralext) group compared with the citalopram group. The CED noted that this was suggestive but further evidence is needed to confirm this finding.
- ◆ The incidence of serious adverse events, withdrawals, and non-serious adverse events did not differ significantly between escitalopram (Cipralext) and citalopram in any of the key studies.
- ◆ Similar to other SSRIs, common side effects of escitalopram (Cipralext) include nausea, headache, sleep disturbance and sexual dysfunction.
- ◆ Escitalopram (Cipralext) costs \$1.55 to \$1.65 per day, compared to \$0.625 for citalopram.
- ◆ Overall, the Committee noted that there is no compelling evidence that escitalopram (Cipralext) offers any therapeutic advantage over citalopram to justify its price premium.
- ◆ The Ministry subsequently negotiated a reduced price for escitalopram (Cipralext).

CEDAC Recommendation:

(<http://www.cadth.ca/index.php/en/cdr/recommendations>)

The Canadian Expert Drug Advisory Committee recommended that escitalopram (Cipralext) not be listed.



Ministry of
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