

PRESS RELEASE – For immediate release

Date: 21st October 2008

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ARE GENERIC THYROID HORMONE MEDICATIONS WORTH IT?

“I’m sick of them (Patient Information Leaflets) - just tear it up and take the medicine.” The pharmacist who said this was obviously unaware of the damage caused by some brands of thyroid medication for susceptible people or the fact that other medications can interfere with thyroxine.

Pam, a hypothyroid patient, has suffered adverse drug reactions to several of the different generic brands of levothyroxine when she was changed from the Goldshield product, “Eltroxin”. She told us “This coincided with a gradual and progressive deterioration in health, starting with episodes of vomiting alternating with diarrhoea. My voice became noticeably hoarse and hypothyroid symptoms began to reappear.” She was prescribed various medications for her symptoms, which gave her even more adverse drug reactions, and had various different hospital interventions such as a barium meal, an endoscopy and a colonoscopy. Often confined to bed for days, her doctor refused to take on board her suggestion that it was due to different brands of thyroxine.

Eventually, after many disagreements with her doctor, she changed doctors *and* her thyroid medication. She is now on a natural thyroid hormone preparation, Armour thyroid, and is very much improved.

“With help and support from my MSP, my computer records have now been annotated and include a record of my ADR to drugs and also my detailed statement of correction. These ensure that my records do, in fact, provide a more accurate reflection of my medical history.”

Thyroid UK surveyed 327 people with hypothyroidism and asked various questions about the medications they took. 76% of the people surveyed are taking levothyroxine and 62% of those would like to see a consistent supply with the same manufacturer. Doctors are told to give generics now because they are cheaper but some hypothyroid patients have to suffer the consequences. “I take Eltroxin by Goldshield. All other brands cause severe lower back pain,” was one of the comments we received. Another survey participant states, “The new tablets now change manufacturer every 28 days and I now have symptoms I have not had for years.” The Goldshield brand came out on top in respect of the levothyroxine products.

29% of the survey participants are taking natural thyroid hormone but many commented on how they cannot obtain this on the NHS with one participant telling us, "Please do a survey about how poorly people do on thyroxine and how well people do on Armour Thyroid."

Adverse drug reactions can be reported to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) via the Yellow Card Scheme directly by the patient but most patients are not aware of this - <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Reportingsafetyproblems/Medicines/index.htm>

So much money is wasted on trying to find the cause of the side effects, as in Pam's case. It would be much better for the NHS to spend a little more money at the outset on branded products such as Eltroxin or natural thyroid hormone.

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For further information contact:

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Note to the Editor:

Lyn Mynott was ill for 15 years without knowing what was wrong. Finally, after a thyroidectomy and treatment with thyroxine, she started to get well again. She began campaigning for better treatment and started a small support group meeting in her living room. After appearing on BBC Watchdog Healthcheck in 1999, she was inundated with emails and phone calls which spurred her on to set up Thyroid UK.

- Is drug switching putting patients at risk?
<http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=20&storycode=4117852>
- Record rise in GP generic prescribing.
<http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=23&storycode=4120302>
- Armour Thyroid Website: <http://www.armourthyroid.com>
- Yellow Card Reporting for Adverse Drug Reactions -
<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/Reportingsafetyproblems/index.htm>

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Registered Charity Number: 1125270