



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Seirbhís Aisíocaíochta Cúraim Phríomhúil
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30th August 2017

Circular 036/17

Reimbursement of Lidocaine 5% Plasters (Versatis®) effective 1st September 2017

Dear Pharmacist,

I refer to Circular 33 / 17 advising you regarding the implementation of the recommendation of the Medicines Management Programme (MMP) in relation to individual approval of Lidocaine 5% medicated plaster (Versatis®) for specific patients. The changes to reimbursement are effective for all newly initiated patients from 1st September 2017. Hospitals have been informed of the change in reimbursement arrangements.

You are reminded that existing patients already on treatment will continue to access reimbursement support until the 30th November, after which time, no further reimbursement will be supported without completion of the online approval process. Pharmacies will have visibility of 'existing' patients on the Secure Scheme Checker from 1 September.

The HSE has also identified those patients who were supplied antivirals since February 2017 to facilitate seamless access within the licensed indication of Versatis®. GPs will not need to apply for reimbursement approval where the patient has been prescribed recent antiviral therapy. Pharmacies will also have visibility of these patients on the Secure Scheme Checker.

To assist further, the HSE has developed a simple patient information leaflet which you may wish to use in your pharmacy. This is in addition to the MMP documentation already published on the HSE website. A copy of both leaflets are enclosed. Patient queries will also be supported through the HSE National Medical Card Line at 1890 252 919.

Applications reviewed by the MMP under Exceptional Circumstances may take up to 3 working days before approval or non-approval will be communicated back to the GP through the GP Application Suite. Pharmacies will not be paid for claims for newly initiated patients unless they are recorded on the Secure Scheme Checker on the Pharmacy Application Suite.

Yours faithfully,

Anne Marie Hoey
Primary Care Reimbursement & Eligibility

Lidocaine 5% medicated plaster (Versatis[®])

Information for patients

Introduction

Lidocaine 5% medicated plaster (Versatis[®]) is an adhesive hydrogel plaster containing the local anaesthetic lidocaine. Local anaesthetics work by reducing pain in the skin when applied to the affected area. Lidocaine 5% medicated plaster is licensed for the local relief of nerve pain that may occur after a previous shingles (herpes zoster) infection. This nerve pain is known as post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN) and is associated with symptoms such as burning, shooting or stabbing type pain.

Over the last five years there has been a large increase in the use of lidocaine 5% medicated plaster (Versatis[®]). The HSE's Medicines Management Programme (MMP) has reviewed the evidence to support the use of lidocaine 5% medicated plaster. This review, based on national and international clinical evidence, shows that lidocaine 5% medicated plaster can be effective in the treatment of nerve pain associated with previous shingles infection. The evidence to show benefit in other types of pain however, is limited.

What other treatment options are available if lidocaine 5% medicated plaster is not suitable or does not provide sufficient pain relief?

Other treatment options will depend on the type and severity of the pain you are experiencing. It is recommended that you speak to your doctor or pharmacist for the most suitable treatment option.

For nerve pain associated with previous shingles infection, capsaicin 0.075% (Axsain[®]) cream may be a suitable alternative. This cream can be applied to the area where nerve pain is present 3 to 4 times daily after healing of the shingles virus.

For soft tissue, muscular and/or rheumatic type pain a topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) gel may be a suitable alternative. An example of a NSAID gel is diclofenac 1% which is available on prescription under the brand names Difene[®], Diclac[®] and Voltarol Emulgel[®]. Diclofenac 1% gel can be applied to the affected area 2 to 4 times daily for up to 14 days for this type of pain.

If topical treatment is ineffective or does not provide sufficient pain relief, alternative oral therapies may be considered by your doctor. For example, Paracetamol 500mg to 1g every four to six hours and/or an oral NSAID may be suitable oral therapies for the treatment of pain.

What reimbursement changes are being introduced for lidocaine 5% medicated plaster?

New patients

From **1 September 2017** if you are starting treatment with lidocaine 5% medicated plaster, your GP must apply with your details to the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) for lidocaine 5% medicated plaster to be authorised on your medical card or drug payment card.

If you are using lidocaine 5% medicated plaster for the treatment of nerve pain associated with previous shingles infection, treatment will be authorised for a duration of three months.

If you are using lidocaine 5% medicated plaster for another type of pain your GP will need to outline the reasons for use and the application will be reviewed by the HSE Medicines Management Programme (MMP) before treatment can be authorised for reimbursement support.

Existing patients

If you have been receiving lidocaine 5% medicated plaster prior to **1 September 2017**, your GP has three months to apply for continued reimbursement support with the PCRS. If approved, treatment will be authorised for a further three months. This should be completed by your G.P. before 30th November 2017 for you to get further supply in December.

What if I need treatment with lidocaine 5% medicated plaster for longer than three months?

If you require treatment with lidocaine 5% medicated plaster for longer than three months your GP can apply for your application to be renewed to authorise a further three months' supply.

Where can I get more information about lidocaine 5% medicated plaster?

You can find more information on lidocaine 5% medicated plaster on the HSE's Medicine Management Programme website at www.hse.ie/yourmedicines.



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Information for patients on lidocaine 5% medicated plaster (VERSATIS®)

Lidocaine 5% medicated plaster (VERSATIS®) is an adhesive plaster containing the local anaesthetic lidocaine.

VERSATIS® is licensed for the local relief of nerve pain that may occur after a previous shingles infection. This type of pain is associated with symptoms such as burning, shooting or stabbing type pain.

A review of the evidence to support the use of VERSATIS® shows that this treatment can be effective for nerve pain associated with previous shingles infection. The evidence to show benefit in other types of pain is limited.

Expenditure on VERSATIS® has escalated in recent years. In 2015, the HSE spent over €30 million on this product.

From 1st September 2017, if your GP wants to start this treatment for you, they must apply with your details to the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) for lidocaine 5% medicated plaster to be authorised on your medical card or drug payment card. Where it is to treat nerve pain associated with a previous shingles infection you will automatically be authorised treatment for a duration of three months.

If you are using VERSATIS® for another type of pain, your GP can apply for approval by submitting your details to the PCRS and your application will be reviewed by the HSE Medicines Management Programme (MMP) before treatment can be authorised for reimbursement support. This may take up to 3 days.

More information is available on www.hse.ie/yourmedicines.

If you have further queries, you can contact the HSE National Medical Card Line at 1890 252 919.

