GlaxoWellcome has introduced Advair® Diskus®, a combination of a bronchodilator and corticosteroid for inhalation. The two medications involved are salmeterol xinafoate, a selective, long-acting, slow onset beta-II agonist which is presently available as Serevent® and fluticasone propionate, a highly potent glucocorticoid anti-inflammatory steroid which is presently available as Flovent® and Flonase®. The inhalation device, Diskus® is a breath-activated inhalation delivery system currently available with the Flovent® and Serevent® product lines.

Clinical studies suggest that Advair® is more effective at improving lung function, controlling asthma symptoms, reducing the use of rescue beta-II agonists, and reducing the incidence of exacerbations than either of its two component agents used alone at the same doses. Clinicians have demonstrated that using a long-acting inhaled bronchodilator in combination with an inhaled corticosteroid offers significantly greater levels of asthma control than using higher doses of inhaled corticosteroids and this is one of the preferred treatment options for any asthmatic who experience daily symptoms.

Advair® is indicated in the maintenance treatment of reversible obstructive airway diseases, including asthma in patient 12 years of age and older, where the use of a combination product is appropriate. This may include patients who are on maintenance doses of long-acting beta-II agonists and inhaled corticosteroids, or those patients who are symptomatic on current inhaled corticosteroid therapy.

Common adverse effects of Advair® are hoarseness/dysphonia, throat irritation, headache, candidiasis of mouth and throat, and palpitations. Pharmacists are reminded to counsel their patients to rinse or gargle with water and where applicable to have patients clean their dentures after each inhalations to prevent occurrences of candidiasis.

Advair® should not be used in patients whose asthma can be managed by occasional use of short-acting, inhaled beta-II agonists and is not to be used as a rescue medication. Advair® is contraindicated in patients with cardiac tacharrhythmias, patients with untreated fungal, bacterial or tuberculous infections of the respiratory tract, patients with a known hypersensitivity to any of its components, and patients with IgE mediated allergic reactions to lactose or milk since Advair® does contain lactose.

The recommended dosage for patients 12 years of age and over is one inhalation twice daily. Doses should be individualized. It is critical that patients are advised that Advair® should not be used to treat acute symptoms and a short-acting beta-II agonist is used for this purpose.

GlaxoWellcome markets Advair® in 3 options, each containing 60 blister doses per device. Advair® 100 Diskus® contains 50 mcg of salmeterol and 100 mcg of fluticasone per blister dose and its wholesale cost is $71.70. Advair® 250 Diskus® contains 50 mcg of salmeterol and 250 mcg of fluticasone and its cost is $85.20. Advair® 500 Diskus® contains 50 mcg of salmeterol and 500 mcg of fluticasone. And its cost is $121.80. Advair® is covered on the Manitoba drug benefit list as a full benefit and on NIHB as a limited use benefit.

REFERENCES: