

Practitioner Advice Information Notice

QUETIAPINE OFF LABEL USE AND GESTATIONAL DIABETES

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For your: Advice and Information **Approved by** Dr Rawiri McKree Jansen

Issues of concern

1.1 Quetiapine off-label (section 29) use

The Medicines Adverse Reaction Committee (MARC) has written to Te Aka Whai Ora raising concerns about the increased prescribing of quetiapine for non-approved (off-label) uses. Quetiapine is an atypical antipsychotic indicated for psychoses, including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Hutherwaite et al.¹ (2018) published a retrospective audit of Aotearoa New Zealand prescribing in primary care that demonstrated most prescribing (72%) was for off-label use (predominantly sedation and anxiety). Most clinical notes did not evidence appropriate informed consent for the off label prescription.

1.2 Quetiapine and routine metabolic monitoring

Furthermore, the Hutherwaite study evidenced practitioners did not deliver appropriate metabolic monitoring of patients prescribed the antipsychotic medications, with nearly one-third of patients having no monitoring at all and two-thirds of patients having only partial monitoring

1.3 Quetiapine and gestational diabetes

Quetiapine (and some other atypical antipsychotics) can increase the risk of adverse metabolic effects, including diabetes, during pregnancy. Medsafe will update the relevant datasheets to advise this.

1.4 Quetiapine and dispensing according to ethnicity

Dispensing data indicates Māori women are more likely to be prescribed quetiapine during pregnancy than non-Māori women during pregnancy. Te Aka Whai Ora will undertake more work to understand whether this is for approved use.

Advice

- MARC advises that a “favourable balance of benefits versus risk **cannot be assumed** when using quetiapine for an unapproved indication in the absence of data on efficacy and safety.” Caution in prescribing for off-label use is required.
- Practitioners are advised that adequate monitoring of patients prescribed quetiapine is expected.

Monitoring

- Te Aka Whai Ora will continue to monitor prescribing/dispensing of quetiapine according to ethnicity, especially concerning off-label use and the prevalence of gestational diabetes in Aotearoa/NZ.
- Practitioners should review their practice, audit prescribing behaviour and ensure that appropriate metabolic monitoring is undertaken. Any prescribing off-label requires that appropriate informed consent conversations have occurred and are documented.



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¹ Huthwaite M, Tucker M, McBain L, et al. 2018. Off label or on trend: a review of the use of quetiapine in New Zealand. *New Zealand Medical Journal* 131(1474): 45-50. URL: <https://journal.nzma.org.nz/journal-articles/off-label-or-on-trend-a-review-of-the-use-of-quetiapine-in-new-zealand>