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Amiodarone vs. Dronedarone- PATIENT INFO SHEET

Amiodarone (generic name), Cordarone, Pacerone (branded names)

Dronedarone(generic name), Multaq (branded name)

Amiodarone is a commonly used drug for the management of heart rhythm disorders. While this is one of our best drugs for treatment of arrhythmias it has potentially serious side effects and requires careful monitoring. These are some guidelines that should be followed in conjunction with specific advice received from your doctors and pharmacist.

A. Precautions

1. Take medication same time each day and avoid drinking grapefruit juice
2. This drug takes several weeks to build-up in your system and also several weeks to come out of your system when discontinued
3. This medication can interact with other commonly used heart drugs such as warfarin, digitalis, beta-blockers, simvastatin etc. ALWAYS check with your doctors about potential interactions when starting a new drug
4. Avoid excessive sun exposure or use protective measures
5. For women- avoid breast-feeding on this drug and talk to your doctor before planning a pregnancy

B. Monitoring

1. Minor side effects can occur with all medications but if you suspect an allergic reaction (difficulty breathing, hives, facial swelling) seek medical attention immediately.
2. Thyroid gland – check your thyroid function (blood test) within the first month and then at least once a year
3. Lungs – check your lung function (breathing test +/- CXR) within the first month and then at least once a year
4. Skin – check for blue–gray skin discoloration
5. Eyes- check for blurred vision or decreased peripheral vision
6. CNS- check for tremors, loss of coordination, numbness or tingling in extremities

Multaq is a second generation amiodarone with some advantages and disadvantages. Ultimately you and your doctors will need to choose between the two agents.

Advantages

1. Safer agent with no lung, eye or thyroid toxicity. Does not require as much monitoring and does not affect warfarin levels (INR)
2. Shorter half life so gets out of body quickly when discontinued

Disadvantages

1. Not safe to use if you have had congestive heart failure or a low ejection fraction
2. Not proven to help with ventricular arrhythmias
3. Much more expensive- no generic options available