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## Withdrawal of sitaxentan in the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension

The 2009 ESC Practice Clinical Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of pulmonary hypertension<sup>(1)</sup> included the endothelin receptor antagonist sitaxentan in an algorithm of evidence-based treatment for pulmonary arterial hypertension<sup>(1)</sup>. Sitaxentan was recommended with a Class I/Level A grade of evidence in WHO functional class III patients and Class IIa/Level C grade of evidence in WHO functional classes II and IV.

Sitaxentan was initially authorised by the European regulatory agency as Thelin in 2006 but in December 2010, after the manufacturer withdrew Thelin from the worldwide market following new information on two cases of fatal liver injury, marketing authorisation was also withdrawn by the EMA.

In the light of the withdrawal and the EMA's<sup>(2)</sup> advice to patients taking Thelin (not to stop medication but review treatment at the next scheduled appointment), the Task Force for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Pulmonary Hypertension of the ESC and the European Respiratory Society (ERS) has issued its own recommendations for treating physicians. This will be published in the *European Heart Journal* 2011; 32: 386-387 in February as a letter to the editor and in the *Eur Respir J* 2011; 37: 475-476.

The Task Force recommends:

1. For the time being, no PAH patient should start *de novo* therapy with Thelin
2. For patients already on treatment with Thelin transition to another endothelin receptor antagonist such as bosentan (Tracleer) or ambrisentan (Volibris) should be considered.
3. In cases where a PAH patient was treated with Thelin because of previous adverse reactions with Tracleer and Volibris, the transition to another class of PAH-approved drugs should be considered (prostanoids or PDE-5 inhibitors)

The Task Force is monitoring the status of sitaxentan, along with all other clinical developments relevant to pulmonary hypertension. This information will be incorporated in the next update of the ESC Practice Clinical Guidelines.

1. Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of pulmonary hypertension.

*Eur Heart J*; 2009: 2493-2537.

<http://www.escardio.org/guidelines-surveys/esc-guidelines/Pages/pulmonary-arterial-hypertension.aspx>

2. Thelin (sitaxentan) to be withdrawn due to cases of unpredictable serious liver injury -Clinical trials are also to be stopped

[http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en\\_GB/document\\_library/Press\\_release/2010/12/WC500099707.pdf](http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Press_release/2010/12/WC500099707.pdf)

Update on the withdrawal of Thelin.

Prescribers should choose alternatives in line with treatment guidelines

[http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en\\_GB/document\\_library/Press\\_release/2010/12/WC500099940.pdf](http://www.ema.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Press_release/2010/12/WC500099940.pdf)

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