

India advocates the adoption of CFC free Inhalers

In a key development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has urged asthma & COPD patients and health professionals to adopt environment friendly asthma and COPD inhalers. This was advised by Dr. Surinder Singh, Drug Controller of India at workshop on Phase-out of CFCs (Chlorofluorocarbons) in Metered-Dose Inhalers (MDIs), Transition Strategy Implementation and Adoption of CFC free Alternatives in India at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Also present on the occasion was Mr. B. P Nilaratna, Joint Secy, MoEF, Prof. R. C. Deka, Director, AIIMS, Ms. Suely Carvalho, UNDP and Dr. A Duraiswamy, Director, Ozone Cell, MoEF and Mr. Madhava Sarma, Ex Executive Secretary, Ozone Secretariat, UNEP.

Addressing the media, Dr. Surinder Singh, Drug Controller of India said, 'Every effort has been made to look after people with asthma or COPD who use inhalers. Environmentally friendly asthma and COPD inhalers are being introduced across the country as chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) phase-out gains momentum. The withdrawal of CFC-containing inhalers follows the Montreal Protocol, where India is a signatory that requires countries to replace CFCs with environmentally friendly alternatives.'

Dr. Surinder Singh, Drug Controller of India added, 'Soon all asthma and COPD inhalers in India will be either dry powder or they will use a new hydrofluoroalkane (HFA) propellant.'

India is one of 195 signatories to the Montreal Protocol and it is working towards phasing out CFCs completely by January 2010. CFCs destroy the ozone layer that protects life on Earth from harmful UV radiation.

Talking about the CFC free alternatives, Prof Deka, Director AIIMS explained, 'These CFC-free inhalers provide the same medicine and the same health benefits as the old CFC-containing inhalers without damaging the ozone layer.'

Some patients may be worried that the medicine in the new inhalers is not the same as the medicine they are used to, because the new inhalers can make it feel, sound, smell or taste different. The medicine is exactly the same medicine and it is just as effective. The spray from the new inhaler may feel softer than from the old one, but it is just as good, or even better, at delivering the drug to where it is needed. It's also a good opportunity to review patients' asthma and COPD treatment and make sure they have their condition under control. ', he added

People with asthma or COPD are being urged to visit their doctor as soon as possible for a CFC-free inhaler and to learn how to use it. A free patient information brochure explaining the changes and how they will affect people with asthma or COPD will be made available.

Extensive clinical trials have been undertaken to determine the safety and effectiveness of the new metered dose inhalers compared with their CFC-containing predecessors. The CFC-free inhalers

have been found to be as safe and effective as the CFC-containing inhalers as well as providing a number of additional benefits.

Research has shown that the HFA solutions produce very small particles which penetrate the small airways in the lung better than the older CFC formulation of the same medicine.¹ Some CFC-free metered-dose inhalers produce particles that travel slower than those in the CFC-containing inhalers, which can make it easier for patients to inhale at the right time when activating the inhaler. And, some of the new CFC-free inhalers have spray that is warmer and less forceful, so it may reduce the risk of patients holding their breath, which can happen when they feel a cold spray.²

Worldwide there are 300 million people with asthma and over 210 million with COPD. As inhalers are the best way to treat these conditions and as the use of inhalers is increasing throughout the world, a lot of effort went into the development of CFC-free inhalers. It has taken more than 20 years of research to develop the CFC-free metered dose inhalers.

1 Zeidler M. Corren J. Hydrofluoroalkane formulations of inhaled corticosteroids for the treatment of asthma. *Treat Respir Med* 2004; 3: 35-44.

2 Leach CL. The CFC to HFA transition and its impact on pulmonary drug development. *Respir Care* 2005; 50: 1201-8.

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