

Indiana Medicaid Therapeutics Committee
Therapeutic Class Review Summary

Therapeutic Class:

Chronic Constipation Agents

Overview:

Chronic idiopathic constipation is a lower gastrointestinal dysmotility disorder, with no known cause, which lasts over six months. Symptoms may include three or less bowel movements each week, abdominal discomfort, bloating, straining, and hard or lumpy stools. Chronic constipation is often treated by making dietary changes, exercising, and by taking fiber and laxatives. However, these alternatives may not relieve all symptoms. Lubiprostone (Amitiza[®]), a pharmacological option that involves a unique mechanism of action, may contribute to symptom alleviation. Tegaserod (Zelnorm[®]) use has been restricted under a treatment investigational new drug protocol, and remains an option for patients who meet specific criteria.

Lubiprostone is a gastrointestinal agent indicated for chronic idiopathic constipation. It mitigates signs and symptoms associated with chronic constipation by specifically activating CIC-2 chloride channels in the luminal cells of the intestinal epithelium, resulting in the production of a chloride-rich intestinal fluid secretion and an increase in intestinal motility. The most common adverse effects are nausea and diarrhea. Due to limited head-to-head comparative trials, comparative efficacy data are limited.

Sales for tegaserod were recently discontinued due a safety analysis that found a higher chance of heart attack, stroke, and worsening heart chest pain that can become a heart attack in patients treated with Zelnorm[®]. Though the number of patients who suffered these cardiovascular events was small, patients treated with tegaserod had a higher chance of encountering these effects than did those who were treated with a sugar pill. Treatment with Zelnorm[®] is an alternative only for patients in critical need of tegaserod. Zelnorm[®] is expected to remain off the market for general use.

Generic Name	Brand Name	Manufacturer	Generic Available
Lubiprostone	Amitiza [®]	Sucampo/Takeda	N

Summary:

Data suggest that lubiprostone is effective in treating chronic constipation. However, comparative efficacy data are limited due to restricted head-to-head comparative trials. Though Zelnorm[®] remains an option for patients in critical need of tegaserod, Zelnorm[®] is expected to remain off the market for general use. The preferred drug list should be based upon FDA-approved indications, efficacy, safety, and cost.