

Medicare Advisers Call for Standards on Imaging

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WASHINGTON — A federal advisory panel wants to raise the bar on quality and use of imaging services.

In a series of recommendations, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission called for national standards for physicians who bill Medicare for interpreting diagnostic imaging services, and for any provider who bills Medicare for perform-

ing such services. MedPAC advises Congress on Medicare payment issues.

There is evidence of variations in the quality of physician interpretations and reports, MedPAC analyst Ariel Winter said at a recent commission meeting. “Ensuring that only qualified physicians are paid for interpreting imaging studies should improve diagnostic accuracy and treatment,” he said.

Standards for physicians would be based on education, training, and experience re-

quired to properly interpret studies. Private organizations would be charged with administering the standards, Mr. Winter said.

Several MedPAC commissioners questioned whether Medicare should get involved in the business of credentialing or accrediting physicians for interpreting imaging studies.

Whether in cardiology or another specialty, Medicare would be taking on responsibilities that previously fell to licensing boards, specialty society certification,

or other private sector organizations, said MedPAC commissioner Sheila Burke, R.N., of the Smithsonian Institution. “It is a new area and it’s not entirely clear to me that Medicare may be the right place for that to occur.”

Mr. Winter acknowledged that some providers might not be able to meet these standards, or incur costs to meet them. For example, they might have to invest in newer equipment or higher credentialed technicians, or they might have to obtain additional education, he said.

Measuring physicians’ use of imaging services should be part of MedPAC’s broader effort to profile fee-for-service physicians on their use of all services, Mr. Winter said. Radiologists can influence which tests physicians order, but physicians are important to the analysis on imaging because “they determine whether a test is appropriate,” he said.

Under the MedPAC recommendations, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services could develop measures of imaging volume for a patient seen by a physician, and could compare these measures to peer benchmarks or clinical guidelines, Mr. Winter said. The agency could then provide this information to the physician in confidence.

“The goal is to encourage physicians who order significantly more tests than their peers to reconsider their practice patterns,” Mr. Winter said.

On other recommendations related to imaging, the panel voted that the Department of Health and Human Services improve Medicare’s coding edits that detect unbundled diagnostic imaging services, and reduce the technical component payment for multiple imaging services performed on contiguous body parts.

Better coding will help Medicare pay more accurately for imaging services and help to control rapid spending growth, Mr. Winter said.

MedPAC also proposed to strengthen the rules in the Ethics in Patient Referral Act (Stark law), which restrict physicians’ investment in the imaging centers to which they refer Medicare or Medicaid patients.

The restrictions already apply to radiology and certain other imaging services, but it’s unclear whether nuclear medicine is a radiology service, Mr. Winter said.

The panel ultimately voted to include nuclear medicine and positron emission tomography procedures as designated health services under the Stark law. Investment in facilities that provide nuclear medicine services is associated with higher use, creating financial incentives to order additional services and to refer patients to facilities in which the physician is an investor. This undermines fair competition, Mr. Winter said.

Not according to Michael J. Wolk, M.D., who is president of the American College of Cardiology. Dr. Wolk criticized MedPAC for recommending “restrictive tactics” in an effort to ratchet down the use of PET scans, CT, and MRI.

Studies that support these recommendations are biased, and specifically exclude examination of these procedures, Dr. Wolk said.

Once-daily
METADATE® CD 
(methylphenidate HCl, USP)
Extended-Release Capsules

Rx Only

R312F Rev. 9/03

BRIEF SUMMARY: Please see full Prescribing Information.

INDICATION AND USAGE: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): METADATE CD is indicated for the treatment of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The efficacy of METADATE CD in the treatment of ADHD was established in one controlled trial of children aged 6 to 15 who met DSM-IV criteria for ADHD (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY).

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Agitation: METADATE CD is contraindicated in patients with marked anxiety, tension and agitation, since the drug may aggravate these symptoms.

Hypersensitivity to Methylphenidate: METADATE CD is contraindicated in patients known to be hypersensitive to methylphenidate or other components of the product.

Glaucoma: METADATE CD is contraindicated in patients with glaucoma.

Tics: METADATE CD is contraindicated in patients with motor tics or with a family history or diagnosis of Tourette’s syndrome. (see ADVERSE REACTIONS).

Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors: METADATE CD is contraindicated during treatment with monoamine oxidase inhibitors, and also within a minimum of 14 days following discontinuation of a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (hypertensive crises may result).

WARNINGS: Depression: METADATE CD should not be used to treat severe depression. Fatigue: METADATE CD should not be used for the prevention or treatment of normal fatigue states.

Long-Term Suppression of Growth: Sufficient data on the safety of long-term use of methylphenidate in children are not yet available. Although a causal relationship has not been established, suppression of growth (i.e., weight gain, and/or height) has been reported with the long-term use of stimulants in children. Therefore, patients requiring long-term therapy should be carefully monitored. Patients who are not growing or gaining weight as expected should have their treatment interrupted.

Psychosis: Clinical experience suggests that in psychotic patients, administration of methylphenidate may exacerbate symptoms of behavior disturbance and thought disorder.

Seizures: There is some clinical evidence that methylphenidate may lower the convulsive threshold in patients with prior history of seizures, in patients with prior EEG abnormalities in absence of seizures, and, very rarely, in absence of history of seizures and no prior EEG evidence of seizures. In the presence of seizures, the drug should be discontinued.

Hypertension and other Cardiovascular Conditions: Use cautiously in patients with hypertension. Blood pressure should be monitored at appropriate intervals in patients taking METADATE CD, especially patients with hypertension. Studies of methylphenidate have shown modest increases of resting pulse and systolic and diastolic blood pressure. Therefore, caution is indicated in treating patients whose underlying medical conditions might be compromised by increases in blood pressure or heart rate, e.g., those with pre-existing hypertension, heart failure, recent myocardial infarction, or hyperthyroidism.

Visual Disturbance: Symptoms of visual disturbances have been encountered in rare cases. Difficulties with accommodation and blurring of vision have been reported.

Use in Children Under Six Years of Age: METADATE CD should not be used in children under six years, since safety and efficacy in this age group have not been established.

DRUG DEPENDENCE: METADATE CD should be given cautiously to patients with a history of drug dependence or alcoholism. Chronic abusive use can lead to marked tolerance and psychological dependence with varying degrees of abnormal behavior. Frank psychotic episodes can occur, especially with parenteral abuse. Careful supervision is required during withdrawal from abusive use since severe depression may occur. Withdrawal following chronic therapeutic use may unmask symptoms of the underlying disorder that may require follow-up.

PRECAUTIONS: Hematologic Monitoring: Periodic CBC, differential, and platelet counts are advised during prolonged therapy.

Information for Patients: Patients should be instructed to take one dose in the morning before breakfast. The patients should be instructed that the capsule may be swallowed whole, or alternatively, the capsule may be opened and the capsule contents sprinkled onto a small amount (teaspoon) of applesauce and given immediately, and not stored for future use. The capsules and the capsule contents must not be crushed or chewed.

To assure safe and effective use of METADATE CD, the information and instructions provided in the patient information section should be discussed with patients.

Drug Interactions: Because of possible effects on blood pressure, METADATE CD should be used cautiously with pressor agents.

Human pharmacologic studies have shown that methylphenidate may inhibit the metabolism of coumarin anticoagulants, anticonvulsants (e.g., phenobarbital, phenytoin, primidone), and some antidepressants (tricyclics and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors). Downward dose adjustment of these drugs may be required when given concomitantly with methylphenidate. It may be necessary to adjust the dosage and monitor plasma drug concentrations (or, in the case of coumarin, coagulation times), when initiating or discontinuing concomitant methylphenidate.

Serious adverse events have been reported in concomitant use with clonidine, although no causality for the combination has been established. The safety of using methylphenidate in combination with clonidine or other centrally acting alpha-2 agonists has not been systematically evaluated.

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: In a lifetime carcinogenicity study carried out in B6C3F1 mice, methylphenidate caused an increase in hepatocellular adenomas and, in males only, an increase in hepatoblastomas, at a daily dose of approximately 60 mg/kg/day. This dose is approximately 30 times and 4 times the maximum recommended human dose of METADATE CD on a mg/kg and mg/m² basis, respectively. Hepatoblastoma is a relatively rare rodent malignant tumor type. There was no increase in total malignant hepatic tumors. The mouse strain used is sensitive to the development of hepatic tumors, and the significance of these results to humans is unknown.

Methylphenidate did not cause any increases in tumors in a lifetime carcinogenicity study carried out in F344 rats; the highest dose used was approximately 45 mg/kg/day, which is approximately 22 times and 5 times the maximum recommended human dose of METADATE CD on a mg/kg and mg/m² basis, respectively.

In a 24-week carcinogenicity study in the transgenic mouse strain p53+/-, which is sensitive to genotoxic carcinogens, there was no evidence of carcinogenicity. Male and female mice were fed diets containing the same concentration of methylphenidate as in the lifetime carcinogenicity study; the high-dose groups were exposed to 60 to 74 mg/kg/day of methylphenidate.

Methylphenidate was not mutagenic in the *in vitro* Ames reverse mutation assay or in the *in vitro* mouse lymphoma cell forward mutation assay. Sister chromatid exchanges and chromosome aberrations were increased, indicative of a weak clastogenic response, in an *in vitro* assay in cultured Chinese Hamster Ovary cells. Methylphenidate was negative *in vivo* in males and females in the mouse bone marrow micronucleus assay.

Methylphenidate did not impair fertility in male or female mice that were fed diets containing the drug in an 18-week Continuous Breeding study. The study was conducted at doses up to 160 mg/kg/day, approximately 80-fold and 8-fold the highest recommended human dose of METADATE CD on a mg/kg and mg/m² basis, respectively.

Pregnancy: Teratogenic Effects: Pregnancy Category C. Methylphenidate has been shown to have teratogenic effects in rabbits when given in doses of 200 mg/kg/day, which is approximately 100 times and 40 times the maximum recommended human dose on a mg/kg and mg/m² basis, respectively.

A reproduction study in rats revealed no evidence of teratogenicity at an oral dose of 58 mg/kg/day. However, this dose, which caused some maternal toxicity, resulted in decreased postnatal pup weights and survival when given to the dams from day one of gestation through the lactation period. This dose is approximately 30 fold and 6 fold the maximum recommended human dose of METADATE CD on a mg/kg and mg/m² basis, respectively.

There are no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. METADATE CD should be used during pregnancy only if the potential benefit justifies the potential risk to the fetus.

Nursing Mothers: It is not known whether methylphenidate is excreted in human milk. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk, caution should be exercised if METADATE® CD (methylphenidate HCl, USP) Extended-Release Capsules are administered to a nursing woman.

Pediatric Use: The safety and efficacy of METADATE CD in children under 6 years old have not been established. Long-term effects of methylphenidate in children have not been well established (see WARNINGS).

ADVERSE REACTIONS: The premarketing development program for METADATE CD included exposures in a total of 228 participants in clinical trials (188 pediatric patients with ADHD, 40 healthy adult subjects). These participants received METADATE CD 20, 40, and/or 60 mg/day. The 188 patients (ages 6 to 15) were evaluated in one controlled clinical study, one controlled, crossover clinical study, and one uncontrolled clinical study. Safety data on all patients are included in the discussion that follows. Adverse reactions were assessed by collecting adverse events, results of physical examinations, vital signs, weights, laboratory analyses, and ECGs.

Adverse events during exposure were obtained primarily by general inquiry and recorded by clinical investigators using terminology of their own choosing. Consequently, it is not possible to provide a meaningful estimate of the proportion of individuals experiencing adverse events without first grouping similar types of events into a smaller number of standardized event categories. In the tables and listings that follow, COSTART terminology has been used to classify reported adverse events.

The stated frequencies of adverse events represent the proportion of individuals who experienced, at least once, a treatment-emergent adverse event of the type listed. An event was considered treatment emergent if it occurred for the first time or worsened while receiving therapy following baseline evaluation.

Adverse Findings in Clinical Trials with METADATE CD: Adverse Events Associated with Discontinuation of Treatment: In the 3-week placebo-controlled, parallel-group trial, two METADATE CD-treated patients (1%) and no placebo-treated patients discontinued due to an adverse event (rash and pruritus; and headache, abdominal pain, and dizziness, respectively).

Adverse Events Occurring at an Incidence of 5% or more Among METADATE CD-Treated Patients: Table 1 enumerates, for a pool of the three studies in pediatric patients with ADHD, at METADATE CD doses of 20, 40, or 60 mg/day, the incidence of treatment-emergent adverse events. One study was a 3-week placebo-controlled, parallel-group trial, one study was a controlled, crossover trial, and the third was an open titration trial. The table includes only those events that occurred in 5% or more of patients treated with METADATE CD where the incidence in patients treated with METADATE CD was greater than the incidence in placebo-treated patients.

The prescriber should be aware that these figures cannot be used to predict the incidence of adverse events in the course of usual medical practice where patient characteristics and other factors differ from those which prevailed in the clinical trials. Similarly, the cited frequencies cannot be compared with figures obtained from other clinical investigations involving different treatments, uses, and investigators. The cited figures, however, do provide the prescribing physician with some basis for estimating the relative contribution of drug and non-drug factors to the adverse event incidence rate in the population studied.

TABLE 1
Incidence of Treatment-Emergent Events¹
in a Pool of 3-4 Week Clinical Trials of METADATE CD

Body System	Preferred Term	METADATE CD (n=188)	Placebo (n=190)
General	Headache	12%	8%
	Abdominal pain (stomach ache)	7%	4%
	Anorexia (loss of appetite)	9%	2%
Digestive System	Insomnia	5%	2%

¹ Events, regardless of causality, for which the incidence for patients treated with METADATE CD was at least 5% and greater than the incidence among placebo-treated patients. Incidence has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Adverse Events with Other Methylphenidate HCl Products: Nervousness and insomnia are the most common adverse reactions reported with other methylphenidate products. Other reactions include hypersensitivity (including skin rash, urticaria, fever, arthralgia, exfoliative dermatitis, erythema multiforme with histopathological findings of necrotizing vasculitis, and thrombocytopenic purpura); anorexia; nausea; dizziness; palpitations; headache; dyskinesia; drowsiness; blood pressure and pulse changes, both up and down; tachycardia; angina; cardiac arrhythmia; abdominal pain; weight loss during prolonged therapy. There have been rare reports of Tourette’s Syndrome. Toxic psychosis has been reported. Although a definite causal relationship has not been established, the following have been reported in patients taking this drug: instances of abnormal liver function, ranging from transaminase elevation to hepatic coma; isolated cases of cerebral arteritis and/or occlusion; leukopenia and/or anemia; transient depressed mood; a few instances of scalp hair loss. Very rare reports of neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS) have been reported, and, in most of these, patients were concurrently receiving therapies associated with NMS. In a single report, a ten year old boy who had been taking methylphenidate for approximately 18 months experienced an NMS-like event within 45 minutes of ingesting his first dose of venlafaxine. It is uncertain whether this case represented a drug-drug interaction, a response to either drug alone, or some other cause.

In children, loss of appetite, abdominal pain, weight loss during prolonged therapy, insomnia and tachycardia may occur more frequently; however, any of the other adverse reactions listed above may also occur.

DRUG ABUSE AND DEPENDENCE: Controlled Substance Class: METADATE CD, like other methylphenidate products, is classified as a Schedule II controlled substance by federal regulation. **Abuse, Dependence, and Tolerance:** See WARNINGS for boxed warning containing drug abuse and dependence information.

OVERDOSAGE: Signs and Symptoms: Signs and symptoms of acute methylphenidate overdose, resulting principally from overstimulation of the CNS and from excessive sympathomimetic effects, may include the following: vomiting, agitation, tremors, hyperreflexia, muscle twitching, convulsions (may be followed by coma), euphoria, confusion, hallucinations, delirium, sweating, flushing, headache, hyperpyrexia, tachycardia, palpitations, cardiac arrhythmias, hypertension, mydriasis, and dryness of mucous membranes.

Recommended Treatment: Treatment consists of appropriate supportive measures. The patient must be protected against self-injury and against external stimuli that would aggravate overstimulation already present. Gastric contents may be evacuated by gastric lavage as indicated. Before performing gastric lavage, control agitation and seizures if present and protect the airway. Other measures to detoxify the gut include administration of activated charcoal and a cathartic. Intensive care must be provided to maintain adequate circulation and respiratory exchange; external cooling procedures may be required for hyperpyrexia.

Efficacy of peritoneal dialysis or extracorporeal hemodialysis for METADATE CD overdose has not been established.

The prolonged release of methylphenidate from METADATE CD should be considered when treating patients with overdose.

Poison Control Center: As with the management of all overdose, the possibility of multiple drug ingestion should be considered. The physician may wish to consider contacting a poison control center for up-to-date information on the management of overdose with methylphenidate.

For more information call 1-888-METADATE (1-888-638-2328) or visit www.metadate-cd.com

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