



Medicine Supply Notification

MSN/2020/024

Opioid agents [parenteral use in critical care]: alfentanil and fentanyl

Alfentanil 1mg/2ml solution for injection amps
Alfentanil 25mg/50ml solution for injection vials
Alfentanil 5mg/10ml solution for injection amps
Alfentanil 5mg/1ml solution for injection amps

Fentanyl 100mcg/2ml solution for injection amps
Fentanyl 2.5mg/50ml solution for injection amps
Fentanyl 500mcg/10ml solution for injection amps

Tier 2 – medium impact*

Date of issue: 05/05/2020

Summary

- Due to a recent increase in demand for the treatment of COVID-19 patients there are very limited supplies of certain presentation of these agents in the supply chain.
- Local stock holding may be variable, and Trusts may have to use lower volume vial sizes to ensure continuity of care until the re-supply of their agent of choice.
- The operational and safety impact of using a large number of vials to make up the required dose should be considered, and provisions to mitigate or lessen the impact on clinical and nursing team made if possible.
- Trusts that hold stock of alfentanil 25mg/50ml and fentanyl 2.5mg/50ml surplus to their requirements over the next two to three weeks may be asked to support others within their region/country to ensure continuity of care for patients undergoing treatment and this will be managed by regional pharmacy procurement specialists in conjunction with the regional chief pharmacists.
- **For Alfentanil:** current data indicates that stocks of 5mg/10ml and 5mg/1ml solution for injection vials are available in sufficient volume to meet anticipated demand over the next two to three weeks. Trusts should therefore use these alternative presentations. Further stock, in the form of an unlicensed alfentanil 25mg/50ml injection is expected to be available w/c 18th May 2020.
- **For Fentanyl:** current data indicates that Trusts may need to use ampoules of both 500mcg/10ml and 100mcg/2ml solution for injection to meet anticipated demand over the next two to three weeks. Further stock of fentanyl 2.5mg/50ml is expected w/c 11 May 2020.
- Further advice will be issued in the coming weeks regarding the ongoing supply management of alfentanil and fentanyl.

Actions Required

Pharmacy procurement teams and critical care clinical leads should:

- review local stock holding of both agents against anticipated patient demand between now and their respective replenishment dates;
- consider other clinical areas within their Trust that may be impacted and ensure they are included in local planning;
- if a local gap in supply is anticipated, contact your regional pharmacy procurement specialist, who will facilitate stock sharing between organisations if possible and appropriate;
- for the alfentanil 5mg/10ml and 5mg/1ml solution for injection vials and fentanyl 500mcg/10ml solution for injection ampoules, consider conducting a risk assessment to assess what mitigating approaches may be needed to address any operational or safety considerations identified;
- for fentanyl injection where only the smaller 2ml presentation is available, work with your Medication Safety Officer and Pharmacy Aseptic Services team, to consider how the required doses may safely be made up using the small vial sizes; and
- only order up to a maximum of four days forecast demand, when supplies become available, to ensure equity of supply to all.

Supporting information

- The existing pandemic guidance on [adaptations to standard UK critical care medication prescribing and administration](#) and [potential changes to anaesthetic drug usage and administration](#) provides guidance on the actions departments of anaesthesia and critical care units should undertake to best utilise and conserve available stock of priority medicines, including fentanyl and alfentanil.
- Due to the use of various formulations and presentations that may be used, a poster has been created to highlight to clinical staff the importance of reading the product label. The poster can be found by following the attached link <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/drug-packaging-and-labelling-during-covid-19-poster-and-screensaver-for-teams/>

Enquiries

Enquiries from NHS Trusts in England should in the first instance be directed to your Regional Pharmacy Procurement Specialist, who will escalate to national teams if required.

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All other organisations should send enquiries about this notice to the DHSC Medicine Supply Team, quoting reference number MSN/2020/024

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