

## Safety Alert

### Confusion risk with trastuzumab emtansine (Kadcyla<sup>®</sup>) and trastuzumab

#### Issue

**Trastuzumab emtansine (Kadcyla<sup>®</sup>) and trastuzumab (e.g. Herceptin<sup>®</sup>) are NOT the same and are NOT interchangeable.<sup>1</sup> Kadcyla<sup>®</sup> is a combination of a monoclonal antibody (trastuzumab) and a cytotoxic agent (emtansine), known as a cytotoxic drug conjugate. Trastuzumab emtansine is NOT a salt of trastuzumab. The doses, treatment schedules and authorized indications for Kadcyla<sup>®</sup> (trastuzumab emtansine) and trastuzumab are different.**

**Confusing nomenclature:** The following all refer to trastuzumab emtansine:

- ado-trastuzumab emtansine (FDA approved generic name)
- trastuzumab emtansine (EMA international non-proprietary name (INN) name)
- Kadcyla<sup>®</sup> (Current brand of trastuzumab emtansine in Europe and the States)

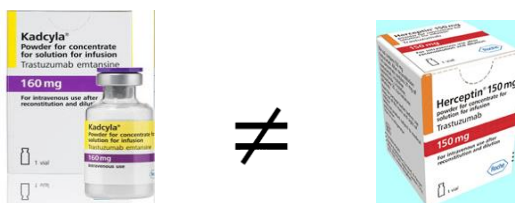
**TDM1 was the term used to describe trastuzumab emtansine in clinical trials**

#### Evidence of Harm

The potential risk for confusion between Kadcyla<sup>®</sup> and trastuzumab, and subsequent harm has been identified by both the FDA and EMA. Sound-alike look-alike drug (SALAD) issues mean there is potential for mis-selection in prescribing, dispensing and administration of these medications. The dosing and treatment schedules for these agents are very different, and care is required to avoid dosing errors and potential harm to the patient.<sup>2,3</sup>

#### How to Reduce the Risks

- Prescribe by brand to ensure the correct product is chosen.



- Pharmacy computer systems and printed prescription labels may truncate the number of characters allowed for a drug name. In order to reduce the risk of incorrect product selection, consider configuring systems so the brand name (Kadcyla<sup>®</sup>) is placed before the generic, or the cytotoxic component is positioned first (emtansine-trastuzumab).
- Consider the use of preprinted prescriptions for both agents.
- **In any case of doubt, consult with the treating physician.**
- Ensure the correct medication is ordered from the wholesaler and that the correct medication is received in the pharmacy. Of note the proprietary packaging uses different cartons, labels and cap colours to differentiate between agents.<sup>4</sup>

**Storage:** Store Kadcyla<sup>®</sup> in a separate fridge location to trastuzumab

1. BNF (2016) Trastuzumab Emtansine (Kadcyla) monograph Accessed via medicinescomplete.com 15 April 2016  
 2. Institute of Safe Medication Practices (2013) Medication safety alert, July 11, 2013. ISMP quarterly action agenda April – June 2013  
 3. Healthy Canadians (Oct 2013) Kadcyla (trastuzumab emtansine) and Herceptin (trastuzumab) - Potential Risk for Medication Error Due to Name Confusion Accessed 4 Apr 2014 at <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2013/36173a-eng.php>  
 4. Roche Products Ireland limited (2013) Kadcyla (trastuzumab emtansine) HCP educational information brochure

Prepared and updated by Fionnuala King, Chief II Pharmacist, St James' Hospital, Dublin & Niamh O'Hanlon, Chief II Pharmacist, St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin  
 In conjunction with, and on behalf of the Irish Medication Safety Network (IMSN).

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