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CLINICAL PHARMACY ASSOCIATION

RESPIRATORY
GROUP



*with you every
breath of the way*



Joint Statement

on behalf of the Association of Respiratory Nurse Specialists, Asthma UK, British Lung Foundation, British Thoracic Society, Education for Health, Primary Care Respiratory Society, Respiratory Education UK, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the UK Clinical Pharmacy Association.

Relvar® (fluticasone furoate / vilanterol) Ellipta Packaging Change

The above partner organisations welcome the changes announced by GSK to the changes in colour and labelling of the Relvar® Ellipta® inhaler across Europe, in response to concerns expressed by the respiratory community. Concerns about the potential for serious patient safety risks associated with the name and colour of Relvar® (fluticasone furoate / vilanterol) Ellipta® were first raised in February 2014, and were shared between partner organisations. The main concerns surrounded use of the colour blue for the mouthpiece cover of both strengths of the Relvar® Ellipta® and also the choice of blue for the label and outer packaging of the lower strength inhaler, since the product is not designed or licensed for relieving symptoms.

In the UK, it is common practice amongst healthcare professionals, patients and patient support groups, and news organisations to describe short-acting beta₂-agonist (SABA) inhalers such as salbutamol and terbutaline as “blue” or “reliever” inhalers. This led to concerns that the association of the colour blue as a reliever inhaler, and the similarity of the Relvar® brand name to the term “reliever” could cause confusion and lead to prescribing errors or for patients to take additional doses during the day.

Since this time, the respiratory professional and patient organisations have been working collaboratively with GSK to eliminate any potential for misunderstandings by patients and healthcare professionals and prevent the inadvertent misuse of Relvar® Ellipta®. We believe that the changes to the colour and labelling of the Relvar® Ellipta® inhaler announced by GSK will achieve this aim. The collaborative effort from each organisation demonstrates how a multidisciplinary approach can effectively identify and manage potential patient safety risks.

The widespread but informal convention that blue inhalers are “reliever” medicines is a principle worth preserving for patient safety. In addition to Relvar®, there are other inhaled medicines, which are not relievers that contain some degree of blue colouring on the inhaler or on their packaging. Our organisations are working collectively in The National Inhaler Group to explore with both manufacturers of inhaled medicines and policy makers, how best to ensure that the blue colour is used exclusively for reliever medicines to avoid any potential confusion. We would also strongly recommend that the European Medicines Agency recognises the colour convention and requires manufacturers to reserve blue colouring on inhalers for “reliever” medicines.