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Misuse of Corticosteroids in Madhya Pradesh

Misuse of corticosteroids is prevailing in Madhya Pradesh. Steroids are prescribed for quick relief of bronchopneumonia, bronchitis, bronchiolitis, fever, temperature of any cause and, also to make the child chubby. When the parents watch the relief of the child by such medicine, they recommend it to their neighbors and relatives and also publicise the practitioner who has given it. They also start keeping it as a household remedy, without knowing the dose and method of tapering and the long term harms of it on the adrenal and the effect of sudden withdrawal. And while approaching to me or some other practitioners for some other ailment they show the strip/bottle to us very proudly that what magic drug is

Betamethasone? Because it is doing magic in wheezing etc. without the consultation of the doctor.

Here in this area of Madhya Pradesh there is no agency to control the dispensing of drugs without prescription. At the same time, cash memos are issued to only one out of thousand customers and that too to the persons who need reimbursement and by the way if some asks for the cash memo he has to wait for hours for it/refused to sell medicine.

I am writing this letter to you with the hope that this will open the watchful eyes of IMA, IAP and Government of MP who in turn will be able to create some strict laws to prohibit unauthorized dispensing of the drugs and also create public awareness of not using drugs without consultation.

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Misuse of Betamethasone

I wish to share my experience regarding misuse of corticosteroids in pediatric practice since 1993, when I returned from Gulf and settled in city of Ujjain (MP). It is not surprising to see irrational prescriptions of corticosteroids from qualified pediatricians. Corticosteroids are frequently misused in respiratory infections, acute bronchiolitis and prolonged fever. Prescriptions are also written

advising injectable steroids to be mixed with injectable antibiotics on outpatient basis (eg. Inj. amoxicillin with Inj. dexamethasone).

Betamethasone in drop form is available in our country since long time. I personally feel that it is one of the most misused corticosteroid given orally to young infants. I evaluated the consumption of betamethasone drops in Ujjain and Shajapur district in last 3 years. The sale of one of the leading brands "Betnesol drops" manufactured by Glaxo company in last 3 years was 24,200 (2006), 22138 (2007) and

CORRESPONDENCE

30140 (2008) bottles, respectively. These figures were shocking. The exact sale of one more brand, Stemin drops manufactured by Ind-Swift Co. was not available, but rough estimation of sale provided to me was around 8000 bottles per year. Apart from these two if we also include the sale of generic formulation (approximately 6000 bottles per year) then the total number of bottles of betamethasone drops sold goes beyond 40000 per year. If this is the situation in small district of Ujjain and Shajapur, then one can imagine the situation at state or national level; the figure may be in millions. I was also informed that for many years company has stopped promoting

this product to doctors, yet the sale remains unaffected.

There is no genuine indication to use betamethasone drops in young infants and I have not used this drug in my 25 years of practice. I request IAP to take action to protect our young infants.

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