

THE PRESCRIBE AWARDS FOR 2023

The annual Prescrire Awards are granted in total independence by the Prescrire Editorial Staff.

2023 Prescrire Drug Awards



Every month, Prescrire's Editorial Staff help health professionals decide which of the multitude of newly authorised products or indications are worth adding to their list of useful treatment options, and which are to be avoided. We do this by conducting systematic analyses of the relevant evaluation data available on new drugs, new indications, new pharmaceutical forms and new dose strengths authorised in Europe or in France. European authorisations account for the majority, and these are the focus of our English edition, *Prescrire International*. The 2023 Prescrire Drug Awards are based on the reviews published in the Marketing Authorisations section of our French edition in 2023.

Prescrire's multidisciplinary team has been conducting and publishing independent drug analyses for 43 years, free from the influence of any companies involved in the healthcare sector.

**No Pilule d'Or,
and only one Prescrire Drug Award**

None of the drugs examined by Prescrire in 2023 represented a major therapeutic advance worthy of a Pilule d'Or (Golden Pill Award). Only one drug received an award, earning a place on the Honours List.

Honours List: blinatumomab (Blincyto[®]) in high-risk first-relapse acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in children.

Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) relapses in about 15% to 20% of children following first-line treatment. The relapse is considered high-risk when it occurs within 18 months of diagnosis or within 6 months of completing first-line treatment. It is usually treated with several phases of chemotherapy, with no standard protocol.

The anti-CD19 and anti-CD3 bispecific monoclonal antibody *blinatumomab* was evaluated as consolidation therapy in children with Philadelphia chromosome-negative high-risk first-relapse ALL in a non-blinded randomised trial versus chemotherapy in 108 patients. When half of the patients had been followed up for at least 31 months, mortality in the *blinatumomab* group was about 17%, versus 43% in the chemotherapy group. Some longer-term data have been published since we last searched the literature for our initial article about this authorisation (1). According to these data, obtained when half of the patients had been followed up for at least 44 months, the estimated 4-year mortality was 23% in the *blinatumomab* group, versus 51% in the control group. These differences in mortality are statistically significant.

Another non-blinded randomised trial compared *blinatumomab* to chemotherapy, using a different dosage of *blinatumomab* from that recommended in the European summary of product characteristics (SmPC). The results also showed lower mortality in the *blinatumomab* group.

The main adverse effects of *blinatumomab* are: neurological disorders, pancreatitis, tumour lysis syndrome and haematological disorders. In these trials, *blinatumomab*'s serious adverse effects appeared to be less frequent than those of the chemotherapy received in the control groups. However, the quality of this evidence is weakened by the absence of blinding.

A notable reduction in mortality, demonstrated in two randomised comparative trials in children with high-risk first-relapse ALL, is a clear therapeutic advance that justifies *blinatumomab*'s place on this year's Honours List.

Blinatumomab illustrates how a drug's harm-benefit balance depends on the clinical situation. In the absence of evidence that *blinatumomab* improves clinical outcomes in adults with ALL who are in remission but have residual leukaemic cells, its harm-benefit balance in that situation is unfavourable (see *Prescrire Int* n° 223).

©Prescrire

► Translated from *Rev Prescrire* February 2024
Volume 44 N° 484 • Page 84

1- Locatelli F et al. "Improved survival and MRD remission with blinatumomab vs. chemotherapy in children with first high-risk relapse B-ALL" *Leukemia* 2023; **37** (1): 222-225.

Pilule d'Or/Golden Pill

A Pilule d'Or (Golden Pill) is awarded to drugs that represent a major therapeutic advance in a particularly poorly served field.

Not awarded in 2023

2023 Honours List

Drugs included on the Honours List constitute a clear advance for some patients compared with existing therapeutic options, albeit with limitations.

Blincyto[®] (*blinatumomab*) Amgen

In high-risk first-relapse acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in children (*Prescrire Int* n° 248)

Noteworthy

Drugs deemed "Noteworthy" provide a modest improvement in patient care.

No Noteworthy drugs in 2023

2023 Prescrire Packaging Awards



When Prescrire evaluates a drug's harm-benefit balance or its ease of use, its packaging is an important factor to take into consideration. Does the packaging help ensure the safety of patients, their families and their

caregivers? Do any aspects of the packaging increase the risk of medication errors or pose a particular danger? Is the packaging well-designed from the users' perspective, and in particular can the doses required be measured accurately?

Our packaging analyses take many factors into account: the clinical situation in which the drug will be used; the patients liable to receive it, especially pregnant women, children or older people; whether family members, carers or nurses will prepare and administer the drug; and whether it will be used in an emergency setting, in hospitals or in the community, obtained on prescription, on the advice of a community pharmacist, or bought by the patient from an internet retailer.

Every aspect of the packaging is analysed for its impact on quality of care and the safety of users and the people around them. We examine in particular:

- Whether international nonproprietary names (INNs) are clearly legible, and whether different dose strengths of the same drug are easily distinguishable;
- The clarity of any information presented graphically, such as diagrams, dosing schedules, symbols or pictograms;
- The devices provided for preparing, measuring and administering doses;
- The risk that someone other than the patient, especially children, could ingest the drug, unnoticed by their carers;
- The quality and clarity of the information provided in the patient leaflet, especially information on how to use the product, its adverse effects, and the situations and patient groups in which the drug poses a particular risk, as well as any information made available through a QR code on the box.

The 2023 Prescrire Packaging Awards pertain to the packaging of drugs evaluated in our French edition in 2023. Two products have earned an award for their particularly well-designed packaging. However, various products received a "Red Card" because their packaging is liable to cause medication errors or poses other dangers.



2023 Prescrire Packaging Awards

Packaging well-designed for the oral administration of high doses of dexamethasone

Dexliq^o oral solution (**dexamethasone**) - Theravia (French authorisation) (*Rev Prescrire* n° 473)

Packaging that made intranasal fentanyl safer to use

Instanyl^o DoseGuard^o nasal spray solution (**fentanyl**) - Takeda (EU centralised procedure) (*Prescrire Int* n° 257)

Intranasal *fentanyl* is authorised for the relief of breakthrough pain in cancer patients, as an add-on to well-conducted maintenance opioid therapy. *Fentanyl* nasal spray was initially marketed under the brand name Instanyl^o in a multidose spray bottle enclosed in a child-resistant box, with no lock-out mechanism to prevent overdoses. Single-dose spray containers, in secondary packaging protected by a child-resistant film, were subsequently marketed alongside these multidose bottles but, in France at least, they were only available in hospitals.

Fentanyl nasal spray was marketed in new packaging in 2023, under the brand name Instanyl^o DoseGuard^o, consisting of a multidose spray bottle with a child-proof cap and a button on the side to unlock the device. An electronic dose management system limits the number of successive doses to 2, in accordance with the recommendation in the SmPC to treat each episode of breakthrough pain with no more than 2 doses, administered at least 10 minutes apart.

In practice, when 2 successive doses are administered within a 60-minute period, an automatic lock-out mechanism prevents any further administrations for 2 hours. This system is designed to limit accidental overdoses, which can be fatal. The priming procedure is complex, and patients must learn how the lock-out system works, but Instanyl^o DoseGuard^o succeeds in making opioid use safer for patients and the people around them, especially children, while at the same time allowing some flexibility in adjusting the dose to the level of pain experienced by patients, both in the community and in hospitals.



Red Cards

39 drugs authorised in the European Union or France in poor-quality packaging received a "Red Card" for various reasons:

- Dry oral forms supplied in multidose bottles: difficult to identify the drug once removed from the bottle, and risk of accidental drug exposure, especially in children;
- Oral liquid forms supplied in bottles with no child-proof cap: risk of accidental drug exposure, especially in children;
- An oral solution supplied in a dropper container, with a recommended dose of up to 60 drops: risk of wrong-dose errors;
- Look-alike packaging: risk of wrong-drug errors;
- Insufficient prominence given to INNs: difficult to identify the drug substance(s) present;
- Incomplete information concerning risks during pregnancy: risk of embryotoxicity, fetotoxicity or pregnancy complications.

©Prescrire

► Excerpt from *Rev Prescrire* February 2024
Volume 44 N° 484 • Pages 85-87

