

Drugs in 2020: a brief review

● Nine of the 109 new drugs, combinations, drug strengths, pharmaceutical forms or indications analysed and rated in our French edition in 2020 constituted a notable therapeutic advance.

BRAVO

– *Ebola vaccine rVSV-Zebov* in Ebola virus disease (*Prescrire Int* n° 223).

A REAL ADVANCE

– *fexinidazole* in sleeping sickness (*Prescrire Int* n° 221).
– *tafamidis* in transthyretin amyloid cardiomyopathy (*Prescrire Int* n° 222)

OFFERS AN ADVANTAGE

– *abemaciclib* in some breast cancers (*Prescrire Int* n° 217).
– *betibeglogene autotemcel* in certain forms of severe beta thalassaemia (*Prescrire Int* n° 221).
– *cannabidiol* in Lennox-Gastaut syndrome and Dravet syndrome (*Prescrire Int* n° 218).
– *glibenclamide* in neonatal diabetes (*Prescrire Int* n° 215).
– *methadone* in cancer pain (*Prescrire Int* n° 215).
– *patisiran* in polyneuropathy associated with amyloidosis (*Prescrire Int* n° 217).

POSSIBLY HELPFUL

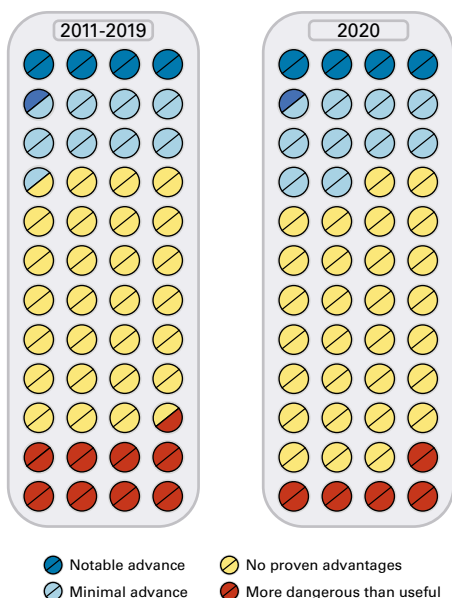
– *apalutamide* in non-metastatic prostate cancer (*Prescrire Int* n° 218).
– *buprenorphine*, in subcutaneous prolonged-release form, in opioid dependence (*Prescrire Int* n° 216).
– *dabrafenib* and *trametinib* combined, in certain types of melanoma (*Prescrire Int* n° 216).
– liposomal *daunorubicin + cytarabine* in acute myeloid leukaemia (*Prescrire Int* n° 215).
– *dolutegravir + lamivudine* in HIV infection (*Prescrire Int* n° 219).
– *dupilumab* in atopic eczema (*Rev Prescrire* n° 442).
– *dupilumab* in nasal polyposis (*Prescrire Int* n° 220).
– *emicizumab* to prevent bleeding in haemophilia A (*Prescrire Int* n° 215).

– *enzalutamide* in non-metastatic, castration-resistant prostate cancer (*Prescrire Int* n° 218).
– *ibalizumab* in multidrug-resistant HIV infection (*Prescrire Int* n° 219).
– *ibuprofen* for intravenous infusion in pain and fever (*Rev Prescrire* n° 443).
– *lanadelumab* in the prevention of hereditary angioedema attacks (*Prescrire Int* n° 220).
– *melatonin* in sleep disorders in children with autism (*Prescrire Int* n° 218).
– *peppermint oil* in non-serious bowel disorders (*Prescrire Int* n° 216).
– *meropenem + vaborbactam* in serious infections (*Prescrire Int* n° 221).
– *mexiletine* in non-dystrophic myotonic disorders (*Rev Prescrire* n° 444).
– *pembrolizumab* in some head and neck cancers (*Prescrire Int* n° 216).
– *vigabatrin* divisible soluble tablets in West syndrome and epilepsy (*Rev Prescrire* n° 441).

JUDGEMENT RESERVED

– *bedaquiline* in multidrug-resistant tuberculosis in adolescents (*Rev Prescrire* n° 446).
– *brentuximab vedotin* in Hodgkin lymphoma (*Rev Prescrire* n° 441).
– *ipilimumab* and *nivolumab* combined, in some renal cancers (*Prescrire Int* n° 215).
– *ivacaftor + lumacaftor* in children with cystic fibrosis (*Rev Prescrire* n° 437).

Therapeutic advances in 2020 compared with the previous 9 years



Prescrire's ratings of new products and indications over the past 10 years

| PRESCRIRE'S RATING | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| BRAVO | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| A REAL ADVANCE | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| OFFERS AN ADVANTAGE | 3 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 11 | 10 | 6 |
| POSSIBLY HELPFUL | 13 | 14 | 12 | 15 | 15 | 9 | 18 | 22 | 13 | 18 |
| NOTHING NEW | 53 | 42 | 48 | 35 | 43 | 56 | 45 | 50 | 61 | 55 |
| JUDGEMENT RESERVED | 7 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 17 |
| NOT ACCEPTABLE | 16 | 15 | 15 | 19 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 9 | 14 | 10 |
| TOTAL | 92 | 82 | 90 | 87 | 87 | 92 | 92 | 99 | 108 | 109 |

- *ivacaftor* in children from 6 months of age with cystic fibrosis (*Rev Prescrire* n° 437).
- *liraglutide* in children with type 2 diabetes (*Prescrire Int* n° 223).
- *nivolumab* in some types of melanoma (*Prescrire Int* n° 216).
- *olaparib* in ovarian cancer (*Prescrire Int* n° 219).
- *pembrolizumab* in some types of melanoma (*Prescrire Int* n° 216).
- *pembrolizumab* in some renal cancers (*Rev Prescrire* n° 445).
- *remdesivir* in covid-19 (*Prescrire Int* n° 222).
- *ribociclib* in pre-menopausal women with inoperable or metastatic breast cancer (*Prescrire Int* n° 217).
- *velmanase alfa* in mild to moderate alpha-mannosidosis (*Prescrire Int* n° 214).
- *venetoclax* in relapsed chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (*Rev Prescrire* n° 436).
- *volanesorsen* in familial chylomicronaemia syndrome (*Prescrire Int* n° 221).
- *voretigene neparvovec* in inherited retinal dystrophy (*Prescrire Int* n° 222).
- injectable *zanamivir* in complicated influenza from the age of 6 months (*Prescrire Int* n° 215).

NOT ACCEPTABLE

- *atezolizumab* in some types of metastatic lung cancer (*Prescrire Int* n° 220).
- *blinatumomab* in some types of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (*Prescrire Int* n° 223).
- *dapagliflozin* in type 1 diabetes (*Prescrire Int* n° 220).
- *denosumab* in steroid-induced osteoporosis (*Prescrire Int* n° 214).

- *diclofenac* non-gastro-resistant tablets (*Rev Prescrire* n° 438).
- *drospirenone* used alone for contraception (*Prescrire Int* n° 220).
- *esketamine* in “treatment-resistant” depression (*Prescrire Int* n° 222).
- *ivabradine* + *carvedilol* in heart failure (*Prescrire Int* n° 217).
- *polatuzumab vedotin* in large B-cell lymphoma (*Prescrire Int* n° 224).
- *romosozumab* in postmenopausal osteoporosis (*Prescrire Int* n° 224).

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Drug shortages: a (big) thorn in the side of pharmacists

● In Europe, community pharmacy staff waste a considerable amount of time each week dealing with the consequences of drug shortages.

In late 2019, the Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU), the organisation which represents unions and professional bodies in Brussels, conducted a survey of the opinions of community pharmacists regarding the impact of drug shortages in Europe in the previous 12 months (1,2).

Despite the limitations of this type of survey, based on participants' statements, the results give some indication of the scale of the phenomenon. They provide evidence that, in most European countries, there is a high, and constantly increasing, frequency of shortages, with an unfortunate impact on patients and on the daily practice of pharmacists. Information is also lacking, as well as the tools and legal means for providing solutions to patients (2).

Nearly all drug classes are involved in the majority of countries. Shortages involved more than 100 drugs in 21 out of 24 countries, and more than 400 drugs in 5 countries (2).

The pharmacists stated that these shortages had been detrimental to patients. In all countries, they considered them to be a cause of distress and inconvenience. In three-quarters of the countries, they

mentioned interruption of treatments and, in more than half of the countries, increases in patients' contribution to drug costs (co-payments). According to the pharmacists, these shortages had other consequences for patients' health, including: use of alternative treatments considered to be less appropriate, or with a higher risk of adverse effects (according to pharmacists in more than half of the countries); and a risk of medication errors (in one-quarter of the countries). These shortages sometimes led to deaths (according to pharmacists in 3 countries) (2).

The pharmacists estimate that each pharmacy team spends on average 6.5 hours per week dealing with the consequences of drug shortages (responses ranged from 2 to 15 hours) (2).

Despite its lack of precision in assessing the harm to patients, this survey illustrates the extent of the shortages and their consequences for community pharmacy practice.

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► Translated from *Rev Prescrire* January 2021
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References 1- Pharmaceutical Group of European Union “Vision and Mission”. www.pgeu.org accessed 29 August 2020: 2 pages. 2- PGEU “PGEU Medicine Shortages Survey 2019 Results”. www.pgeu.org accessed 29 August 2020: 9 pages.