Information sheet of Dopamine Agonists

The following drugs are commonly used in patients with Parkinson’s disease and are classed as Dopamine Agonists. They are Ropinirole (Requip ®), Cabergoline (Cabaser ®), Pramipexole (Mirapexin ®). There is also a transdermal patch called Rotigotine (Neupro ®). These drugs can be useful to help the tremor and the slowness seen in Parkinson’s patients. Occasionally side effects occur, the most common one being nausea on first starting the drug, so often you will be given an anti-nausea drug called Domperidone (Motilium ®) to prevent this.

Other side-effects sometimes seen are swelling of the ankles, dizziness on standing due to blood pressure dropping and also occasionally some confusion or hallucinations. Sleepiness can occur and it is advisable when first starting this drug and during the period of increasing the dose (titration period) that if you drive a car you should always be with another person, in case the sleepiness comes on whilst driving.

A very rare side-effect with Cabergoline is fibrosis of the lungs and narrowing or leaking of the heart valves. This would give increasing shortness of breath over a period of time. If you get shortness of breath whilst taking the drug let your GP or Specialist know but don’t stop the drug immediately as it is much more likely that the breathing problem is due to other causes not related to the Parkinson treatment. We now monitor by yearly chest X-rays and heart scans (echocardiograms).

The Rotigotine patch can occasionally cause a local skin reaction (1 in 20).

Very rarely with Parkinson drugs people taking them do normal things more excessively than usual, for example; eating, gambling, shopping, hoarding objects or having sex. Do let the doctor/nurse know if you or your partner thinks this is happening to you.

Most of the side-effects are mild and it is not necessary to stop the drug. However, if you feel the side-effects are outweighing the benefit of the drug, then we would consider stopping the drug. It is best to try and contact Jane Mills, PDNS or the doctor who prescribed the drug to discuss this, as it is usually not advisable to stop the drug suddenly, unless you have just started it. Often the symptoms go away if the dose of the drug is decreased, rather than completely stopping the drug. You may not notice any difference in your movements/tremor on starting the new drug but this may be because the dose to start with is small and is gradually built up. Therefore please continue taking it. If you need further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with, Jane Mills, Parkinson Nurse, or your Consultant through their secretary, whose numbers are available via the hospital switchboard (01689 863000).

If you do not understand the above information or have concerns then do not start the new drug until you have further discussed them with either Jane Mills or your Specialist.