

The Medical Letter®

On Drugs and Therapeutics

Published by The Medical Letter, Inc. • 1000 Main Street, New Rochelle, NY 10801 • A Nonprofit Publication

Volume 50 (Issue 1286)
May 19, 2008

www.medicalletter.org

IN BRIEF

IV Artesunate for Severe Malaria

The drug of choice for patients who require parenteral treatment for malaria is IV artesunate, which is available now from the CDC Malaria Branch (M-F, 8 AM-4:30 PM eastern time, 770-488-7788 or, after hours, 770-488-7100). Artesunate appears to be more effective than quinine¹ and safer than quinidine, the other parenteral alternatives in the US. The CDC has supplies of artesunate in Atlanta and in 8 quarantine stations in major airports around the US. It will release the drug for appropriate patients (severe disease or unable to take oral drugs) if it can be supplied as quickly as quinidine, or if quinidine has failed, been poorly tolerated, or is contraindicated.

The herbal artemisinin derivatives artemether and artesunate are used worldwide for treatment of malaria caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*, but have not been marketed in the US.^{2,3} About 1500 cases of malaria are diagnosed each year in the US in returning travelers, and about 5% of these have severe disease.⁴

Artesunate is generally given over 3 days in 2.4 mg/kg doses at 0, 12, 24 and 48 hours. It should be accompanied as soon as possible by an oral drug such as atovaquone/proguanil (*Malarone*), doxycycline (*Vibramycin*, and others; not for children <8 years old), clindamycin (*Cleocin*, and others) or mefloquine (*Lariam*, and others).

1. A Dondorp et al. South East Asian Quinine Artesunate Malaria Trial (SEAQUAMAT) Artesunate versus quinine for treatment of severe falciparum malaria: a randomised trial. *Lancet* 2005; 366:717.
2. Drugs for parasitic infections. New Rochelle, NY: The Medical Letter; 2007:34.
3. NJ White. Qinghaosu (artemisinin): the price of success. *Science* 2008; 320:330.
4. PJ Rosenthal. Artesunate for the treatment of severe falciparum malaria. *N Engl J Med* 2008; 358:1829.

The Medical Letter®

On Drugs and Therapeutics

EDITOR: Mark Abramowicz, M.D.
EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Gianna Zuccotti, M.D., M.P.H., Weill Medical College of Cornell University
DEPUTY EDITOR: Jean-Marie Pflomm, Pharm.D.
ASSISTANT EDITOR, DRUG INFORMATION: Susan Morey, Pharm.D.
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR: Eric J. Epstein, M.D., Albert Einstein College of Medicine
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, DRUG INTERACTIONS: Philip D. Hansten, Pharm.D., University of Washington
ADVISORY BOARD:
Jules Hirsch, M.D., Rockefeller University
David N. Juurlink, BPhM, M.D., PhD, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
Richard B. Kim, M.D., University of Western Ontario
Gerald L. Mandell, M.D., University of Virginia School of Medicine
Hans Meinertz, M.D., University Hospital, Copenhagen
Dan M. Roden, M.D., Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
F. Estelle R. Simons, M.D., University of Manitoba
Neal H. Steigbigel, M.D., New York University School of Medicine
SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Donna Goodstein, Amy Faucard
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Cynthia Macapagal Covey
EDITORIAL FELLOWS:
Vanessa K. Dalton, M.D., M.P.H., University of Michigan Medical School
Lauren K. Schwartz, M.D., Mount Sinai School of Medicine
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Liz Donohue
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR: Cheryl Brown
MANAGING EDITOR: Susie Wong

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SALES: Gene Carbona
FULFILLMENT AND SYSTEMS MANAGER: Cristine Romatowski
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS: Joanne F. Valentino
VICE PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER: Yosef Wissner-Levy
Founded in 1959 by
Arthur Kallet and Harold Aaron, M.D.

Copyright and Disclaimer: The Medical Letter is an independent nonprofit organization that provides healthcare professionals with unbiased drug prescribing recommendations. The editorial process used for its publications relies on a review of published and unpublished literature, with an emphasis on controlled clinical trials, and on the opinions of its consultants. The Medical Letter is supported solely by subscription fees and accepts no advertising, grants or donations. The content of The Medical Letter is controlled by the Editor, who declares no conflict. The members of the Advisory Board are required to disclose any potential conflict of interest.

No part of the material may be reproduced or transmitted by any process in whole or in part without prior permission in writing. The editors do not warrant that all the material in this publication is accurate and complete in every respect. The editors shall not be held responsible for any damage resulting from any error, inaccuracy or omission.

Subscription Services

Mailing Address:
The Medical Letter, Inc.
1000 Main Street
New Rochelle, NY 10801-7537
Customer Service:
Call: 800-211-2769 or 914-235-0500
Fax: 914-632-1733
Web Site: www.medicalletter.org
E-mail: custserv@medicalletter.org

Permissions:
To reproduce any portion of this issue, please e-mail your request to: permissions@medicalletter.org

Subscriptions (US):
1 year - \$98; 2 years - \$167;
3 years - \$235. \$49 per year for students, interns, residents and fellows in the US and Canada.
CME: \$49 for 26 credits.

E-mail site license inquiries to:
info@medicalletter.org or call 800-211-2769 x315.
Special fees for bulk subscriptions. Special classroom rates are available. Back issues are \$12 each. Major credit cards accepted.

Copyright 2008. ISSN 1523-2859