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June 30, 2006

Clinical Practice Alert:
Ensuring an Adequate Supply of Benzathine Penicillin G
AND
Benzathine Penicillin G Remains the Drug of Choice for Syphilis

Dear Colleague:

This letter is to update you on the status of Benzathine Penicillin G in Los Angeles County.

As you may be aware, King (Monarch) Pharmaceuticals, has been experiencing difficulty meeting the demand for Bicillin® L-A since taking over production from Wyeth-Ayerst earlier this year. To ensure an equitable and controlled distribution of Bicillin® L-A, King Pharmaceuticals has been restricting wholesalers from stockpiling locally. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have been assured by King Pharmaceuticals that there are more than adequate central stores of Bicillin® L-A and are working closely with the FDA Drug Shortages Office to monitor the situation.

In the interim, the Los Angeles County Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Program recommends the following steps to ensure that all syphilis cases in Los Angeles County are promptly and appropriately treated.

- Plan ahead: review stocks of Bicillin® L-A regularly. If you are likely to require a normal replenishment of stock, then contact your wholesale distributor so they can order your supplies for you directly in a timely manner.
- Clinics and pharmacies who are having difficulty replenishing their supply of Bicillin® L-A should ask their local wholesaler to contact King Pharmaceuticals wholesale trade line at 888-840-5370. The wholesaler can work with King to obtain supplies expressly for your clinic.

- If working with your local wholesaler has not been successful, contact Joel Newton at King directly at 1-888-423-5464, extension 88373. Explain that your wholesaler has not been able to provide your clinic or pharmacy with the Bicillin® L-A that you need. He will be able to facilitate the release of Bicillin to the wholesaler for use at your pharmacy.

If you should experience any difficulties obtaining the supply you need, please contact one of our STD Program medical staff at 213-744-3070 for assistance.

- When ordering benzathine penicillin G for the treatment of syphilis, please sure to order **Bicillin L-A®** and NOT Bicillin C-R®. Bicillin® C-R is NOT recommended for the treatment of syphilis. See box below for CDC STD Treatment Guidelines¹
- For providers treating a patient with diagnosis of **primary, secondary, or early latent** syphilis and no Bicillin-LA® available for treatment, they should be instructed to contact the Los Angeles County STD Program. If possible, our field staff will deliver the treatment to your facility and conduct an on-site contact interview. Please call the STD Program at 213-744-3070 and ask to speak with the Field Services Emergency Bicillin Coordinator.

As this supply problem may continue for the foreseeable future, it is important that we work together to ensure adequate penicillin supplies. Again, please contact us if you are having any difficulties obtaining Bicillin® L-A.

It is critical that patients in Los Angeles County continue to be treated with the only known effective therapy for syphilis, Bicillin® L-A (Benzathine penicillin G). Your cooperation and patience during this shortage is much appreciated.

Sincerely,



Peter R. Kerndt, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, STD Program

**BENZATHINE PENICILLIN G (Bicillin® L-A) IS THE
DRUG OF CHOICE FOR SYPHILIS**

2002 CDC STD Treatment Guidelines¹

Recommended Regimen for Adults

Primary, secondary, and early latent

- **Benzathine penicillin G** 2.4 million units IM in a SINGLE DOSE^a.

Late latent and unknown duration

- **Benzathine penicillin G** 7.2 million units total, administered as 3 doses of 2.4 million units IM, at 1-week intervals

Epidemiologic treatment of contacts

- **Benzathine penicillin G** 2.4 million units IM in a SINGLE DOSE.

^a Benzathine penicillin G (Bicillin® L-A) can be given as one large IM injection of 2.4 MU or 2 smaller IM injections of 1.2 MU each.

Bicillin® C-R should NOT be used to treat syphilis.

¹ Sexually transmitted disease treatment guidelines 2002. MMWR 2002; 51 (no. RR-6). 2002, CDC: Atlanta, GA. P. 1-80.