From NPS MedicineWise

Diabetes management — keeping up to date

The management of type 2 diabetes (T2D) is rapidly evolving with the introduction of an increasing number of new medicines, updating of guidelines and emerging clinical outcome data. Medicine selection for treatment of T2D has become increasingly complex — especially when considering the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme subsidy of certain medicine combinations. On the other hand, some things have not changed; optimising glycaemic control, managing risk of complications and promoting a healthy lifestyle are still the cornerstones of diabetes care. Despite the new medicines available for the treatment of T2D, prescribers should continue to individualise their choice of therapy at each point of escalation based on patient and medicine factors.

Beyond selecting the most appropriate therapy lies the challenge of improving adherence to diabetes medicines. Better adherence to medicines ensures that patients achieve their glycaemic targets and reduce the risk of short and long term diabetes complications. It is important to assess adherence before intensifying diabetes therapy, which may help identify adverse events.

An emerging change, opportunity and challenge for prescribers will be the use of biosimilars in diabetes management, beginning with insulin analogues. Biological agents come with their own set of efficacy and safety considerations, which may influence prescribing in primary care settings. The diabetes environment is soon to be affected by these considerations by way of the new insulin glargine biosimilar.

By being better informed about medicine choices, health professionals can help people with T2D to achieve improved glycaemic control, reduce associated long term complications and minimise medicine-related adverse effects. The new educational program from NPS MedicineWise — "Type 2 diabetes: what's next after metformin?" — provides general practitioners, pharmacists, practice nurses and diabetes educators with the latest evidence on second and third line medicines for lowering blood glucose levels and with strategies for improving adherence to metformin therapy. To access the educational program, visit www.nps.org.au/diabetes.

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