

NATIONAL



AUTHORITY

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CIRCULAR NO. 027

To: all health workers

Increased risk of non-melanoma skin cancer associated with Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)

Hydrochlorothiazide is a diuretic drug used in the treatment of high blood pressure, usually in combination with other anti-hypertensive drugs. Emerging safety information has indicated an increased risk of non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC), Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma associated with increasing cumulative dose (long term use) of HCTZ exposure. Photosensitizing actions of HCTZ a known adverse effect, the drug could act as possible mechanism for NMSC. There is however no similar risk associated with other diuretics and other anti-hypertensives like calcium channel blockers, Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors or Angiotensin II receptor blockers.

Patients taking HCTZ should be informed of the risk of NMSC and advised to regularly check their skin for any new lesions and promptly report any suspicious skin lesions. Suspicious skin lesions should be promptly examined potentially including histological examinations of biopsies.

Possible preventive measures such as limited exposure to sunlight and adequate protection when exposed to sunlight should be advised to patients in order to minimise the risk of skin cancer. The use of HCTZ may also need to be reconsidered in patients who have experienced previous NMSC.

We would like to remind all health workers of their legal obligation as stated under "section (6) of the National Drug Policy and Authority (Pharmacovigilance) regulations, 2014" to report all serious adverse drug events and any other medicine related concerns that arise during the process of providing health care. Reports can be submitted to NDA by email at druginfo@nda.or.ug or Tel **0414-255665** or Whatsapp **0791415555**.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.


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Promoting and protecting public health
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