



PIC QUESTION OF THE WEEK: 6/30/08

Q: What are the current guidelines for treatment of gonorrhea and how are they related to the concept of *expedited partner therapy*?

A: Gonorrhea occurs in approximately 700,000 Americans each year. Because of the frequency of resistance of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* to fluoroquinolones, these drugs are no longer recommended for treatment of this sexually transmissible disease (STD). Ceftriaxone (Rocephin), administered intramuscularly, is considered first-line treatment for all types of gonorrhea. Cefixime (Suprax; Lupin Pharmaceuticals), another third-generation cephalosporin, is considered an appropriate alternative, except in cases of pharyngeal gonorrhea. Cefixime *tablets* were discontinued in 2002 and subsequently re-introduced in April, 2008. The liquid dosage form has been available for several years. The recommended regimen of cefixime for the treatment of gonorrhea (except pharyngeal) is a 400 mg tablet administered as a single dose. Azithromycin (1g) is often given in conjunction with cefixime to eliminate frequent co-infection with chlamydia. *Expedited partner therapy* (EPT) is a program that provides for the administration of an appropriate drug (s) to the partner of a patient diagnosed with a STD. It may take the form of separate prescriptions for both the primary case and partner or the delivery of medication to the partner (patient-delivered partner therapy; PDPT). In either case, the partner can be provided medication without previous medical evaluation by a physician. This practice has been evaluated in a number of clinical trials and is supported by the CDC and American Medical Association. It appears to be especially effective in reducing transmission and re-infection with gonorrhea and chlamydia. This practice is not recommended for men having sex with men (MSM) or patients with syphilis. Some form of EPT is now permissible in eleven states, prohibited in thirteen, and potentially allowable in the remainder. Major points of controversy include the lack of a direct patient-prescriber relationship and confidentiality. EPT is permissible in Pennsylvania. The reader should consult the legal status of this practice in their specific state and also identify the method by which EPT can be expedited.

References:

- CDC. First-line oral gonorrhea treatment available again in United States. <http://www.cdc.gov/std/general/cefixime-25may2008.pdf> (accessed June 12, 2008).
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- CDC. Legal status of expedited partner therapy (EPT). <http://www.cdc.gov/std/ept/legal/default.htm> (accessed June 25, 2008).

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