



Electronic Medicines Compendium (eMC) Resource Guide

Introduction

The Electronic Medicines Compendium (eMC) is a website that collates information about medicines directly from pharmaceutical companies. The eMC provides free, easily accessible up-to-date, information about thousands of licensed prescription and over-the-counter medicines in the UK.

The eMC contains three types of documents. These are the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC/SmPC), the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) and Risk Minimisation Material (RMM). These are produced by the drug manufacturer and updated as required.

The site contains information from over 250 pharmaceutical companies. This information has been approved by the relevant licensing authority either the MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency) or the EMA (European Medicines Agency) prior to publishing.

Information on the site includes over 14,000 documents.

Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) - this document describes in detail the properties, effects and warnings about the medicine and is written to guide healthcare professionals who use the medicine. The information in the SPC makes up the product licence i.e. all of the licensed indications for the medicine will be included in this document. This is a key first line source when looking for information on medicines.

Patient Information Leaflets (PIL) - the PIL is the leaflet intended to be read by the user (patient) and is included in the medicines packaging. Most are presented as a PDF.

Risk Minimisation Material (RMM) - for some medicines, the pharmaceutical company has a regulatory obligation to produce information for healthcare professionals and/or patients that will minimise the risk during use of a medicine. Examples include sodium valproate and edoxaban.

The eMC is updated regularly and wherever possible contains the latest information.

Not all pharmaceutical companies subscribe to the eMC and the SPCs for these products will not be found on this site and alternative sources will need to be used e.g. MHRA website

How to access

To access Electronic Medicines Compendium (eMC)

- Go to www.medicines.org.uk/emc/

How to Search

- Enter the name of the drug in the search box. The first few letters will produce a drop down box of possible suggestions including both proprietary and generic names.
- Click on the required drug name or company and this will be added to the search box, then click GO

- A list of products will then appear, select the appropriate preparation by clicking on the product name underlined in bold or the SPC(SmPC), PIL or RMM hyperlink.

Examples

1) Dose of simvastatin in renal impairment

- Searching for “simvastatin”, will produce all available hits in alphabetical order. This will all include SPCs and PILs where simvastatin is listed as an active ingredient. If there are many hits they may be spread over more than one page.
- To open a document click on the product name. The date this information was last updated is displayed on the right hand side of the page.
- All SPCs are set out in the same format. For example, name, form, indications, administration, interactions, undesirable effects etc. You can either click on the required sub-heading again, located on the right hand side of the page to be taken straight to that section, or you can scroll down to see the full SPC.
- To find information on the recommended dose of simvastatin in renal impairment, scroll down to 4.2 Posology and method of administration, or click on the direct link on the right hand side of the page.
- It is worthwhile reviewing the remainder of the SPC, as there may be further advice on renal impairment e.g. monitoring recommendations in a separate section of the SPC.

2) Is azathioprine licensed for the treatment of idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura?

- Enter azathioprine into the search box.
- Produces a number of azathioprine SPCs and PILs, both generic and proprietary
- Select an SPC and then therapeutic indications (4.1) includes chronic refractory idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura

3) Is an alert card available for golimumab (Simponi®) 50mg pre-filled pen?

- Click on the MEDICINES hyperlink at the top of the homepage and select the RMM DIRECTORY from the drop down box.
- Enter golimumab or Simponi into the search box on the left hand side of the page.
- All available educational risk minimisation material available for golimumab is displayed.
- A patient alert card is available and can be printed as a PDF.
- Alternatively, RMMs can be found using the A-Z directory at the top of the RMM page. Medicines are indexed under their brand name (e.g. Simponi®).
- In addition, RMMs can be accessed from the page where you find the SPC for the product by clicking on the Risk Materials tab.

Searching by manufacturer

You can also search for products made by a certain manufacturer. E.g. if you search for “Pfizer”, a dropdown menu will appear, to choose between Pfizer Consumer Healthcare and Pfizer Ltd. If you choose Pfizer Consumer Healthcare, a list of the OTC or prescription products made by this manufacturer will be displayed, and the SPC/PIL can be retrieved from here.

Advanced search

The advanced search option can also be used to search the eMC. The most useful options are to search ‘By Word or Phrase’ or ‘By SPC Section’.

By Word or Phrase

This allows you to search for a specific word or phrase which appears anywhere in an SPC or PIL.

For example, if you type in “myasthenia gravis”, this produces a list of all the SPCs and PILs that contain the words “myasthenia gravis”. As all sections of the SPC/PILs are being searched this will produce hits for drugs that can be used to treat myasthenia gravis (MG), drugs that are contraindicated in MG and drugs that have MG listed as an adverse effect. For example, Abstral[®] (fentanyl) sublingual tablets are cautioned in myasthenia gravis.

By SmPC (SPC) section

This allows you to search for a specific word or phrase in an individual section of an SPC (but not PIL).

For example, if you wanted to search for which SPCs list “hypocalcaemia” as a side effect of their drug, select the SPC section you want to search – so in this case you choose section “4.8 Undesirable effects”.

Select ‘contains’

Type in the side effect you want to search for e.g. hypocalcaemia

Click “add”

then click “Search”

Here, you are presented all of SPCs that list “hypocalcaemia” as one of the side effects of their drug.

Similarly, if you want to search for which drugs are licensed for a hypocalcaemia e.g. go back to the first screen, and select “4.1 Therapeutic Indications” and search for hypocalcaemia as above.



N.B. if the search box doesn't appear on the page click on to reveal this

Test Exercises

1) What is the dose of ofloxacin tablets for a patient with renal impairment? (Creatinine clearance = 18.7ml/min)

2) A patient has noticed that he has been experiencing galactorrhoea since he has been commenced on metoclopramide tablets for nausea. Is this a known side effect of metoclopramide?

3) Are there any drugs that are contraindicated in patients with an allergy to eggs?

4) A consultant phones to ask if domperidone (Motilium[®]) tablets contain lactose. He has a patient who has lactose intolerance and even the smallest amount of lactose can aggravate her. Is there any alternative domperidone product available?