Roche

Pharmaceuticals

IMPORTANT CORRECTION OF DRUG INFORMATION

September 2001

Dear Doctor:

We are writing to you to correct a typographical error in our IMPORTANT DRUG WARNING letter regarding Roferon®-A (Interferon alfa-2a, recombinant) which you received in July.

The previous letter informed you of safety revisions to the Roferon-A product information. The Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) has requested a boxed warning statement for all alpha interferons to inform health care providers of serious and life-threatening adverse reactions that have been reported. In response to this request, the following statement has been added into the complete product information as a black box warning:

> Alpha interferons, including Interferon alfa-2a, cause or aggravate fatal or life-threatening neuropsychiatric, autoimmune, ischemic, and infectious disorders. Patients should be monitored closely with periodic clinical and laboratory evaluations. Patients with persistently severe or worsening signs or symptoms of these conditions should be withdrawn from therapy. In many, but not all cases, these disorders resolve after stopping Interferon alfa-2a therapy (see WARNINGS and ADVERSE REACTIONS).

In addition, recently observed serious adverse events with alpha interferons have also included suppression of bone marrow function, which may result in severe cytopenias. To address this issue, the following statement has been added into the WARNINGS section of the Roferon-A complete product information. Please note that the previous letter provided incorrect discontinuation parameters for severe decreases in neutrophil and platelet counts. The below paragraph provides the correct parameters for discontinuation:

> "Alpha interferons suppress bone marrow function and may result in severe cytopenias including very rare events of aplastic anemia. It is advised that complete blood counts (CBC) be obtained pretreatment and monitored routinely during therapy. Alpha interferon therapy should be discontinued in patients who develop severe decreases in neutrophil ($<0.5 \times 10^9$/L) or platelet counts ($<25 \times 10^9$/L)."

Please refer to the revised complete product information provided in your July letter. If you have any questions about Roferon-A or these safety revisions, please call the toll-free number for the Roche Pharmaceutical Service Center at 1-800-526-6367. Also, if you are aware of any adverse event potentially associated with Roferon-A therapy, report such information to Roche at the above number or to the Food and Drug Administration MedWatch program at 1-800-FDA-1088 or http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/medwatch.

Sincerely,

G. Harb, MD

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