Bassetlaw Memory Assessment Service - Treatment for Alzheimers

Mental Health Services for Older People
What are Aricept (Donepezil), Exelon (Rivastigmine), Galantamine (Reminyl) and Ebixa (Memantine)?

These are the names of the approved drugs licensed for the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease. They are not a cure for Alzheimer’s disease, nor do they actually stop the progression of the disease.

An NHS body called the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (commonly known as NICE) is responsible for reviewing the use of drug treatments and the available evidence to support their use. It also makes a judgement on whether the treatment represents good value for money if it is available as part of NHS treatment. The most recent NICE review of the drug treatments for dementia in Alzheimer’s disease was carried out in January 2011 and reviewed again in April 2015.

The advice currently given to NHS organisations is that Donepezil, Rivastigmine and Galantamine should be used for mild to moderate stages of Alzheimer’s disease. Rivastigmine is also licensed in the UK for the treatment of dementia that is associated with Parkinson’s disease. Memantine can be used in later stages of Alzheimer’s or it can be used where there may be issues with side effects from the other choices.

How do they work?
Research shows that people with Alzheimer’s disease don’t have enough Acetylcholine in their brain. Acetylcholine is a neurotransmitter (chemical messenger) in the brain that is associated with memory and learning. Donepezil, Rivastigmine, and Galantamine (known as acetylcholinesterase inhibitors) work by slowing down the rate at which Acetylcholine naturally breaks down so that more of it remains available in the brain. This can improve a number of brain functions – particularly memory and learning – and can also improve brain function affecting motivation, restlessness and the ability to look after oneself. Memantine works by acting on another chemical messenger, Glutamate. There is evidence that suggests that in Alzheimer’s the body produces too much of this. This can damage the sites in the brain where other chemical messengers work. Memantine acts by preventing this from happening, allowing the normal activity of other chemical messengers.

How effective are they?

Around 50% of the patients show benefit. In some people the benefit is relatively mild; in others, it can be significant. Unfortunately there is no accurate way of knowing how well the medication will effect individuals until it has been tried. Trials have shown that these drugs can improve a patient’s condition for at least nine months and up to two years in some cases. The drugs do not alter the underlying process of memory loss but may still be considered as valuable treatment in delaying the effects of memory loss. However, apart from Memantine, these drugs are only used to treat mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease and may not
work for people with more advanced Alzheimer’s disease. Although Memantine can be used in more advanced memory problems, it too is only effective for so long. This is because as the disease progresses, the number of functioning brain cells decreases – so there are less areas of the brain for the medication to work on.

**What are the possible side effects?**

Side effects are generally mild and only affect one person in twenty. The most common with Donepezil, Rivastigmine, and Galantamine are nausea, diarrhoea, poor sleep, tiredness and loss of appetite. Memantine can sometimes cause sleepiness, confusion, or vomiting.

These are usually mild and last for one to two weeks. They should settle over the first month of treatment. If mild side effects are experienced, simply make a note of them and discuss them with the nurse when you next attend the clinic. If you have cardiac problems and the nurse has discussed this with you, then possible side effects are dizziness, fainting episodes and low pulse rate. If you experience any of these, please contact the memory clinic as soon as possible. If you have breathing problems such as COPD or Asthma, possible side effects include shortness of breath. If this occurs, please ring the memory clinic or your GP as soon as possible. On some occasions there may be issues due to other health conditions and the nurse in the clinic will discuss this with you.
If your side effects are severe, contact the memory clinic as directed on the back page of this leaflet.

What happens if you are prescribed this medication?

These drugs do not help everyone. The first three months are a trial period to see if they are beneficial. Many people are worried when they do not notice much change. The medication can take several months to have an effect. We assess response using the memory test we have done with you before as well as other tests if appropriate. We will also ask how you feel the medication is working for you and any changes you have noticed and also talk about any changes in Quality of Life.

We start on the lowest dose of medication and can increase if we need to. We will either bring you back to clinic to increase medication if you do not report any side effects, or, you, or a relative, can telephone us to let us know how you are and we will post you another prescription. If you think you may run out of medication before your next clinic appointment, please contact the memory clinic and we will arrange for a prescription to get you.

If the medication has shown to be of benefit, you will continue on it and your GP will be asked to prescribe for you. You will then be reviewed regularly by your GP. If there is no benefit evident, the medication will be discontinued and you will be seen 6-8 weeks later for a post-discharge appointment. If there
are any problems or side effects whilst taking the medication during the three month trial period, you should contact the memory clinic as soon as possible and a nurse will discuss options with you. Your GP will be kept informed of your progress throughout.
To contact the Team please call 01909 572408

Office hours are: Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

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Na życzenie, dokument ten można uzyskać w innych językach i formatach.
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هم دستاويز ديگر زبانون اور مطلوب شکل (قارمیث) میں بهی دستیاب ہے

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