April 3, 2020

Dear Ms. Schimenti,

The American Epilepsy Society (AES) would like to request your consideration to relay the following important information to your members regarding therapeutic substitutions of medications for patients with epilepsy, in case of medication shortages in the current public health environment.

AES Statement on Therapeutic Substitution of Medications

Several governors have issued or are considering emergency proclamations that permit a pharmacist to make therapeutic substitution of medications without physician approval, should medication shortages occur.

The American Epilepsy Society (AES) strongly encourages pharmacists to make every effort to keep patients with epilepsy on their current regimen of antiseizure medications (ASM). Pharmacists should consult with the patient’s prescriber/healthcare provider prior to making any therapeutic substitution of ASM.

Generic substitution of ASM has been shown to be safe and is appropriate for patients with epilepsy. While the AES appreciates efforts to ensure patients receive medications during the COVID-19 crisis, there are important concerns for individuals with epilepsy that make therapeutic substitutions of ASM less than optimal and possibly harmful. For many patients with epilepsy, it is very difficult to balance seizure control with adverse effects and drug-drug interactions of ASM. Additionally, ASM have a wide range of mechanisms of action, pharmacokinetics, adverse effect profiles, and drug interactions. While almost all ASM have similar FDA approved indications, individual patients with the same seizure classification may have very different clinical responses to the same medication. In addition, many patients require multiple adjustments of ASM, particularly when given in combination, to achieve optimal outcomes.

AES appreciates your assistance with disseminating this information to your members to ensure optimal care for patients with epilepsy during the current challenging situation. If you have questions, please feel free to contact us or AES Executive Director Eileen Murray at emurray@aesnet.org.

Sincerely,

William Davis Gaillard, MD
AES President

Timothy E. Welty, PharmD
AES Council on Clinical Activities Chair