Malta, 22 November 2007

Circular No. P18/2007

Dear Healthcare Professional,

Re: Benefit Risk Balance of Prexige® (lumiracoxib)

Following the suspension of the marketing authorisation of Prexige® (lumiracoxib) in the UK by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the Medicines Authority is issuing this circular to clarify the current status of this product in Malta and other countries.

Following rare reports of severe liver reactions, which resulted in the withdrawal of the marketing authorisation of all doses of this product in Australia, and the withdrawal of the marketing authorisation of higher doses in New Zealand, an Urgent Safety Restriction (USR) was implemented at a European level in August 2007 to minimize risk of severe liver reactions with the 100mg lumiracoxib dose. Importantly, the new measures included baseline and monthly Liver Function Tests (LFTs) and contra-indications for patients with either current or previous hepatic dysfunction/disease or prior drug-induced hepatotoxicity. Following consultation with European regulatory authorities, these new prescribing restrictions were brought to the attention of prescribers by the marketing authorization holder of this product (Novartis) through an approved Dear Healthcare Professional Letter (attached here for your perusal).

Since August, European regulatory authorities are conducting a review of the overall risks and benefits of lumiracoxib, and have continued to monitor all reports of liver adverse reactions worldwide. For the UK, the MHRA has concluded that the current evidence is sufficient to suspend the marketing authorisation for Prexige®. Similar action has also been taken in Germany by the Bfarm (German regulatory authority). The outcome of the European-wide review of the benefit risk profile of lumiracoxib at a European Medicines Agency (EMEA) level is still ongoing. The Medicines Authority has concluded that the current evidence is insufficient to warrant a suspension of this product in Malta and will not take any regulatory action until the outcome of the Article 107 referral procedure which has been initiated at a European level. This type of procedure is initiated in cases where a Member State (in this case the UK and Germany) withdraws, suspends or changes the

marketing authorisation of a nationally authorised medicine as a result of the evaluation of safety data. The Committee for Human Medicinal Products (CHMP) at the EMEA is asked to prepare an opinion on whether or not the regulatory actions should be implemented throughout the European Union, thus providing for a harmonised European approach.

The Medicines Authority will closely follow this review and inform prescribers and patients in a timely fashion about any regulatory action and new advice following the assessment of this product, which has been marketed in Malta since April 2007. In the meantime, the Medicines Authority strongly advises prescribers to weigh the benefits of lumiracoxib against the risks when prescribing to patients, as is the common practice when prescribing all medicinal products, and to adhere to prescribing information as listed in the Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) of this product.

Furthermore, Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs) associated with this medicinal product should be promptly reported to the Medicines Authority by filling in an ADR reporting form. This may be accessed on: http://www.medicinesauthority.gov.mt/pub/adr.doc
Should you require any further information please contact the Medicines Authority on 23439000 or by e-mail at: postlicensing.mru@gov.mt