



Key message circulated with PCRS Green/Red report

December 2019

Tips on safer use of Clarithromycin

Clarithromycin is the second most commonly prescribed antibiotic in Ireland. For those with respiratory tract infections (RTI) that need an antibiotic, amoxicillin or doxycycline are usually a better safer choice (see www.antibioticprescribing.ie). Doxycycline is a safe alternative in penicillin allergy. Use of clarithromycin is high in Ireland compared to other European countries. There is no evidence that there is a good reason for this high use.

Drugs which interact with macrolides with significant potential for patient harm in combination include: Statins, warfarin, direct oral anticoagulants (DOACS), colchicine, lercanidipine, benzodiazepines, digoxin, ticagrelor. Macrolides are strongly advised against in patients on medications that prolong the QT-interval including: many antipsychotic medications, tricyclic antidepressants and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), amiodarone, domperidone, lithium and tamoxifen.

- Macrolides must not be used in Patients with known QT prolongation or a history of ventricular dysrhythmia.
- Azithromycin is generally not a good alternative to clarithromycin for RTI.
- Erythromycin should be avoided as it has limited efficacy and is poorly tolerated.