

Gulucitime versus Glucantime: A Serious Warning on Counterfeit Medicines

Dear Editor,

Cutaneous leishmaniasis is caused by a flagellated parasite and transmitted through a bite by bloodsucking sand-flies.^[1] Cutaneous leishmaniasis is characterized by ulcerative skin lesions. This is an endemic disease in the Middle East, especially Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indian, and Nepal.^[2] Since the 1940s, pentavalent antimony compounds have been considered as the first line of treatment for all forms of leishmaniasis. Meglumine antimoniate and sodium stibogluconate are the well-known pentavalent antimony agents.^[3] Glucantime (Sanofi Aventis, France) is a brand product of meglumine antimoniate, which is supplied in 5 mL colorless ampules with concentration 300 mg/mL. Every five ampules are packed in a box, and there are not any visible particles in Glucantime ampules. In January 2019, a batch of meglumine antimoniate under brand “Gulucitime” is imported to Iran and is distributed between certain health centers. The appearance of this product was the same as pervious “Glucantime”

bathes, except the obvious typographical error [Figure 1]. Visible sediment particles in some ampules and improper packaging also were remarkable [Figure 2]. Iranian dermatologists prescribed “Gulucitime” for cutaneous leishmaniasis patients in the mentioned period. However, the clinical outcome was not seen at all, and the clinical situation of patients deteriorated. After a while, the physician suspected of the originality of the “Gulucitime” and similar reports was seen in Pakistan. Finally, the WHO Region of the Eastern Mediterranean confirmed counterfeit meglumine antimoniate (Gulucitime) circulating in Iran and Pakistan.^[4] Counterfeit drugs, especially lifesaving drugs, target the health of patients in less developed countries. It is necessary to make stronger state licensure supervision to avoid such disasters.^[5] This letter emphasis to aware the physicians regarding counterfeit meglumine antimoniate. The physician should avoid prescribing such medicines if there is any abnormal sign in medicine package, including typographical errors and sediment particles.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

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Figure 1: (a and b) “Glucantime” ampules versus “Gulucitime” ampules



Figure 2: Low-quality packaging (a) and visible sediment particles (b) in “Gulucitime” ampules

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