

Lomustine Fact Sheet

This information sheet contains some answers to the following questions:

1. What is lomustine?
2. Why is lomustine prescribed?
3. What changes are happening with lomustine in Canada?
4. What can you do about these changes?
5. Who can you contact about these changes?

What is lomustine?

Lomustine is the generic name of a chemotherapy drug. It is also called CCNU. In Canada, lomustine is made by the pharmaceutical company Bristol Myers Squibb™ (BMS). BMS sells lomustine under the brand name CeeNU®.

Why is lomustine used to treat brain cancer?

Brain cancers are very challenging to treat. There are many different types of brain tumours and they can only be treated with drugs that can pass through the bloodstream and into the brain. Lomustine is one of the few drugs that can pass through the bloodstream and into the brain to treat brain tumours.

- Lomustine is what doctors prescribe when a patient's first brain cancer treatment doesn't work and the tumour gets worse[i].
- Lomustine is a very important part of treatments that combine chemotherapy and radiation. For example, lomustine is a very important part of the chemotherapy combinations:
 - PCV (Procarbazine, CeeNU® and Vincristine). PCV is used with radiation therapy to treat lower grade brain cancers called oligodendroglioma. When given with radiation therapy, PCV prevents the tumour from getting worse (progressing) 2 times longer than when receiving radiation alone[ii].
 - CCV (CeeNU®, Cisplatin and Vincristine). CCV is used with radiation therapy to treat medulloblastoma[iii]. Medulloblastoma is a central nervous system (CNS) tumour and the most common type of brain cancer in children.

What is happening with lomustine in Canada?

In April 2021, BMS Global announced they will stop making and supplying CeeNU® worldwide. BMS will stop distributing lomustine in Canada in June 2023. So far, no other company has announced that it will make or supply lomustine in Canada.

- Health Canada issued a drug discontinuation notice through the Drug Shortages Canada website on April 19, 2021[iv]. The Canadian Drug Agency, Health Canada, provincial cancer agencies or the provincial health departments have not yet made any public announcements about the discontinuation of lomustine.

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What is happening with lomustine in Canada?...cont.

- In 2013 a company in the United States called NextSource™ bought the rights to make and distribute lomustine. They rebranded lomustine as Gleostine® and raised the price by 1900%. NextSource™ is now the only company making lomustine in the United States.[v]



What does this mean for patients who take lomustine?

It is possible that people in Canada taking lomustine to treat their brain tumour will no longer be able to get a prescription for lomustine after June 2023. We don't know what will happen to drug trials using lomustine. But the discontinuation of lomustine may also impact the number and availability of clinical trials for recurrent glioblastoma.

Are there other options?

At this time, there are no other options to replace lomustine once it is discontinued in Canada in June 2023. Although research into treatments for brain cancer is progressing, no new drug treatments are expected in Canada in the near future.

What can I do about this?

Stay informed! Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada will continue to monitor the situation and keep the community updated. You may also share this information with your Physician and/or Healthcare Team to ensure they are informed of this situation.



Facts about lomustine

- Lomustine was first approved for use in Canada in 1974.
- Doctors prescribe lomustine to treat:
 - brain cancers in adults and children for primary tumours and tumours that spread to the brain from other cancers
 - Hodgkin's Lymphoma[ix] (a cancer of the lymphatic system)
- Patients take lomustine as a pill. Usually an oncology pharmacist prepares the prescribed dose and a medical oncologist checks on patients during regular outpatient visits.
- Patients don't need to be admitted to hospital to take lomustine. They can take it safely at home.

Facts about brain cancer

- Brain cancers affect people of all ages. Approximately 3,260 Canadians were diagnosed with a primary brain cancer in 2020.[vi]
- Only 1 in 4 people are likely to survive longer than 5 years from the time they are diagnosed with our current treatments.[vii]
- Brain cancers are now the single leading cause of cancer deaths in Canadians under 30 years of age.[viii]

References



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[iv] <https://www.drugshortagescanada.ca/discontinuance/137687>

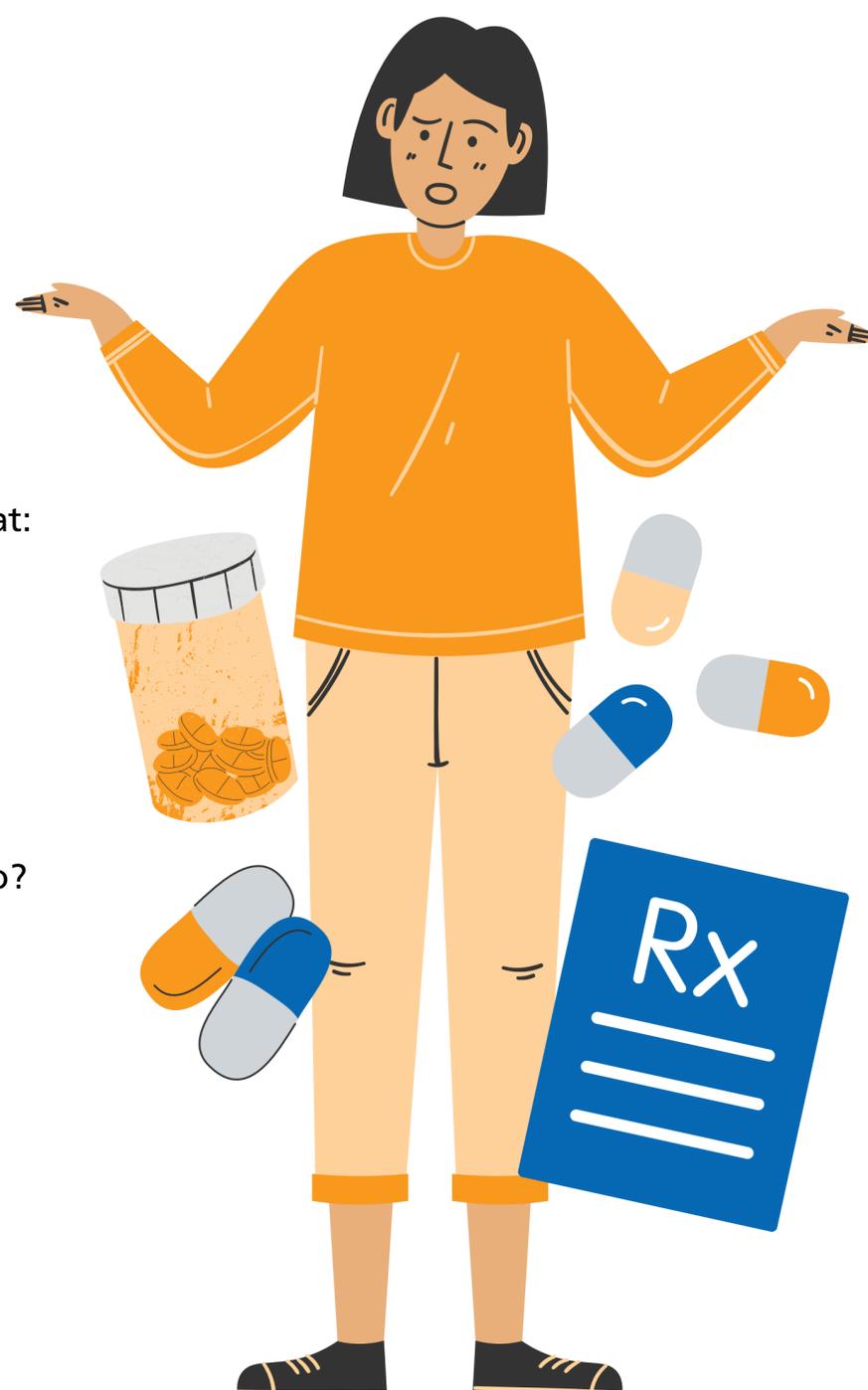
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[vi] Brain Tumour Registry of Canada. 2021 Incidence and Mortality Report. Accessed at <https://braintumourregistry.ca/incidence-and-mortality-report>

[vii] Brain Tumour Registry of Canada. 2020 Survival Report. Accessed at: <https://braintumourregistry.ca/survival-report>

[viii] Canadian Cancer Society. 2021. Canadian Cancer Statistics Annual Report.

[ix] Product Monograph. Bristol Myers Squibb. Last updated Feb 17, 2016. Accessed at: <https://health-products.canada.ca/dpd-bdpp/info.do?lang=en&code=2531>



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