



# ALTERNATIVE DRUG FORMULATIONS RISE TO THE FOREFRONT OF CARE

SUN PHARMA BRINGS A TRUSTWORTHY AND GROWING PACKAGE OF OFFERINGS FOR SENIORS WHO CANNOT OR WILL NOT SWALLOW SOLID MEDICATION FORMS

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It was a simple yet revolutionary question: What if the thousands of seniors who can't swallow pills because of physical or cognitive impairments had a new way to receive life-sustaining medications?

Sun Pharma began offering an answer in August 2018, when it brought its first alternative formulation product to the American long-term care (LTC) market. Since then, more than 1.4 million U.S. residents have gained access to the company's three FDA-approved sprinkle formulations.

More solutions are on the way, including the first FDA-approved extended-release liquid version of metformin.

This quickly expanding portfolio is designed to improve healthcare provider and resident expectations surrounding the med-pass processes.

"Sun Pharma is committed to providing a portfolio of alternative-formulation products designed to address the unmet needs of long-term care residents who have issues swallowing solid medications," said Mark Hagler, senior VP of LTC at Sun Pharma.

The sprinkle and liquid formulations are designed to eliminate the need to crush medications for these types of residents.

**ADMINISTRATION ISSUES**

Pill crushing may not be the best solution. About 500 medications are on the Institute for Safe Medication Practices Do Not Crush list because manual manipulation may alter their efficacy and safety

features. Yet pill crushing is commonplace in many nursing homes and sometimes inappropriate crushing of medications (including those on the Do Not Crush list) occurs. Indeed, according to a 2011 survey of four nursing homes, some 38% of residents (n=306) received inappropriately crushed medication.

Pill crushing is a widespread practice because it is often needed for residents who cannot or will not swallow solid medication forms due to comorbidities such as a stroke, dementia, Alzheimer's or other conditions, or who may become combative when asked to take a standard pill.

"The number of patients in long-term care who have issues swallowing solid medications is eye-opening," said Christopher Chappel, M.D., medical director of Florida-based Chappel Senior Care and Chappel Group Research.

Serving all those residents — crushing with specified devices, cleaning those devices and checking that the residents get full doses of the

crushed medications — also may lead to unintended consequences.

Among the common pill-related challenges is esophagus inflammation, said Meenakshi Patel, M.D., a consultant for Sun Pharma who has nearly 30 years' experience as a long-term care physician and medical director.

"There are errors being made all the time



**Sprinkle formulations are designed to eliminate the need to crush medications.**

— not on purpose, not to harm a patient — but it's just the nature of the med pass," Chappel said. "With the alternative formulations, you get these tiny pellets and each is its own dose of the medication."

**THE SOLUTIONS**

Sun Pharma's solutions — including a beta blocker, a statin and a selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI) — are meant to help skilled nursing providers. The goal is effective treatment of conditions such as hypertension, high cholesterol, heart failure, anxiety, neuropathy or chronic pain, even when those diagnoses coexist with swallowing issues.

Even by reducing the need to crush just a few pills, staff may find more time in their schedule to focus on meaningful resident interactions.

Each no-taste sprinkle dose can be swallowed whole, opened and sprinkled over foods like apple-sauce or pudding, or opened and administered via nasogastric tube.

"The formulations are a very welcome addition," said Patel, whose nurses appreciate the switch to alternate formulas and are eager for more common medications to be reformulated, allowing for easier administration for residents

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who cannot or will not swallow solid forms of medication.

In the past, generic and branded formulations of metoprolol succinate could not be crushed, forcing healthcare practitioners to use the immediate release formulation, which does not have the same indications as the extended-release version. Sun Pharma has solved this unmet need by producing an extended-release version of metoprolol succinate with three administration options.

Sun Pharma's other recently launched alternative formulation products include the first and only FDA-approved sprinkle formulation of rosuvastatin as well as a delayed release sprinkle formulated SNRI.

**ECONOMICAL OUTREACH**

Recognizing the power of its technology, Sun Pharma has chosen to

reformulate commonly prescribed long-term care medications to reach the most residents first — and keep costs for the pioneering options reasonable.

Sun Pharma's fourth alternative formulation product for long-term care was expected to hit the market in February 2020. This product is the first and only FDA-approved extended-release liquid formulation of metformin designed for residents who cannot or will not swallow solid medication forms.

The existing formulations are available through Amerisource-Bergen, McKesson and Cardinal Health, the nation's three largest drug wholesalers. They can be rolled into any in-house med pass system, either in bottles or blister packs.

Chappel expects familiarity to fuel interest in such alternative formulations.

"They are a game changer," he said. ■

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**— MEENAKSHI PATEL, M.D.**

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