

The Carlat Psychiatry Report

CHANTIX (varenicline) Fact Sheet

Manufacturer: Pfizer; patent expires 2018.

Indications: Smoking cessation.

Mechanism: Dual mechanism of action: 1) Partial agonist at nicotinic receptors, mimicking nicotine effects on the brain; 2) Blocks nicotine from binding to these receptors, thereby decreasing the reinforcing effect of smoking.

Efficacy: Quit rates about 40% after 3 to 4 months, vs. 30% with Zyban and 20% with placebo.

Dosing:

- Supplied as 0.5 mg white tablet and 1 mg light blue tablet.
- Because of high risk of nausea, titrate slowly: Days 1-3: 0.5 mg/day; Days 4-7: 0.5 mg BID; thereafter: 1 mg BID. Continue for 12-24 weeks depending on response.
- Most convenient way to prescribe: “Starting Month Pak,” which contains 0.5 mg x 11 tablets and 1 mg x 42 tablets.
- Price varies depending on pharmacy, but a month-long course costs around \$130.00.
- Patients should take it after eating and with a full glass of water.

Side Effects:

- Most common: nausea (30%-40% of patients), insomnia, constipation, flatulence.
- Not a controlled substance, no abuse potential.

Pharmacokinetics:

- Half-life 24 hours.
- Excreted unchanged in urine, no hepatic metabolism.

Drug-drug interactions:

- Can be combined with Zyban.
- When combined with nicotine replacement therapy, causes a high incidence of nausea, headache, vomiting, and dizziness.
- No other drug interactions.

Laboratory monitoring:

- None required.

Pearls: Patients should set a quit date and start Chantix one week before quitting.