

Systemic Anti Cancer Treatment Protocol**Paclitaxel and Gemcitabine
Advanced Breast Cancer****PROTOCOL REF: MPHAPAGEBR
(Version No: 1.1)****Approved for use in:**

Metastatic breast cancer where initial chemotherapy (including anthracycline) has failed.
PS 0-1

Dosage:

Drug	Dosage	Route	Frequency
Paclitaxel	175mg/m ²	IV	Day 1
Gemcitabine	1250mg/m ²	IV	Day 1 and Day 8

Repeated every 21 days, for 6 cycles.

May continue if responding to treatment and no significant toxicity

Supportive Treatments:

Domperidone 10mg tablets, to be taken up to three times a day as required

Extravasation risk:

Paclitaxel: Vesicant

Gemcitabine: Neutral

Administration:

- Paclitaxel must be administered using a non-PVC giving set with a 0.22 micron filter.

Issue Date: 20 th April 2021 Review Date: April 2024	Page 1 of 5	Protocol reference: MPHAPAGEBR
Author: Helen Flint	Authorised by: Joanne McCaughey	Version No: 1.1

- Paclitaxel in solution may show haziness which is attributed to the formulation of paclitaxel.
- Excessive shaking, agitation, or vibration of paclitaxel may induce precipitation and should be avoided
- Premedication treatment of chlorphenamine, dexamethasone and famotidine is given prior to paclitaxel to reduce the risk of hypersensitivity. Paclitaxel reactions commonly occur within the first few minutes of starting the infusion most likely with the first two cycles.
- Famotidine can be stopped after three cycles for those patients who do not experience a drug hypersensitivity reaction.

Day	Drug	Dose	Route	Diluent and rate
1	Dexamethasone	20mg	IV bolus	30 minutes before chemotherapy
1	Famotidine	20mg	Oral	At least 60 minutes before chemotherapy (can be discontinued after three cycles for those patients who do not experience a drug hypersensitivity reaction).
1	Chlorphenamine	10mg	IV bolus	30 minutes before paclitaxel
1	Paclitaxel	175mg/m²	IV Infusion	500mL sodium chloride 0.9% over 3 hours
1	Gemcitabine	1250mg/m²	IV Infusion	250mL sodium chloride 0.9% over 30 minutes
8	Dexamethasone	8mg	Oral	30 mins before chemotherapy
8	Gemcitabine	1250mg/m²	IV Infusion	250mL sodium chloride 0.9% over 30 minutes

Main Toxicities

Haematological	Myelosuppression. Neutropenia, thrombocytopenia, anaemia.
Gastrointestinal	Diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, mucosal inflammation
Cardiac	Bradycardia. Arrhythmias. Heart failure.
Dermatological	Alopecia. Erythematous rash. Transient skin and nail changes (mild). Pruritis. Itching. Sweating.
Vascular disorders	Hypotension, thrombosis, hypertension, thrombophlebitis. Peripheral vasculitis.
Respiratory	Dyspnoea. Cough. Pulmonary oedema, interstitial pneumonitis and adult respiratory distress syndrome have been reported with gemcitabine.
Nervous System	Peripheral neuropathy. Headache. Insomnia. Somnolence.
Hypersensitivity reactions	Paclitaxel infusion-related hypersensitivity reactions
General	Myalgia/arthralgia. Flu-like syndrome. Ovarian failure/infertility. Peripheral oedema (mild –moderate & reversible), facial oedema. Injection site reactions. Back pain. Rhinitis is common with gemcitabine. Elevation of LFTs and alkaline phosphatase. Increased bilirubin levels. Gemcitabine can commonly cause anorexia Infertility, early menopause

Investigations and Treatment Plan:

	Pre	Cycle 1	Cycle 1d8	Cycle 2	Cycle 2d8	Cycle 3	Ongoing
Medical Assessment	X			X			Alternate cycles
Nursing Assessment	X	X	X	X	X	X	Every cycle
FBC	X	X	X	X	X	X	Every cycle
Magnesium		X		X		X	Day 1 only
U&E & LFT	X	X	X	X	X	X	Every cycle
Informed Consent	X						

Issue Date: 20 th April 2021 Review Date: April 2024	Page 3 of 5	Protocol reference: MPHAPAGEBR
Author: Helen Flint	Authorised by: Joanne McCaughey	Version No: 1.1

CT scan	X						Every 8 to 12 weeks as clinically indicated
PS recorded	X	X	X	X	X	X	Every cycle
Toxicities documented	X	X	X	X	X	X	Every cycle
Weight recorded	X	X	X	X	X	X	Every cycle

Dose Modifications:

Haematological toxicity

Day 1 Paclitaxel and Gemcitabine

Proceed on day 1 if:-

Platelets $\geq 100 \times 10^9/L$	ANC $\geq 1.0 \times 10^9/L$
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Delay 1 week on day 1 if:-

Platelets $\leq 99 \times 10^9/L$	ANC $\leq 0.9 \times 10^9/L$
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Day 8 Gemcitabine

Proceed on day 8 if:

Platelets $\geq 75 \times 10^9/L$	ANC $\geq 1.0 \times 10^9/L$
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Omit day 8 if the above parameters are not met, and restart on day 1 of subsequent cycle

Non-haematological toxicity

Hepatic Impairment

For paclitaxel, if bilirubin $< 1.25 \times \text{ULN}$ and ALT $< 10 \times \text{ULN}$, proceed with full dose.

Otherwise, consider a dose reduction. Not recommended in severe hepatic impairment

If bilirubin $> 27 \mu\text{mol/L}$, consider initiating treatment with gemcitabine $800\text{mg}/\text{m}^2$.

Peripheral neuropathy: If a Grade 2 or worse neuropathy develops, paclitaxel should be reduced to $135\text{mg}/\text{m}^2$ in all subsequent cycles.

Issue Date: 20 th April 2021 Review Date: April 2024	Page 4 of 5	Protocol reference: MPHAPAGEBR
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If progressive neuropathy is observed after this dose reduction, then treatment with paclitaxel should be discontinued.

Myalgia / Arthralgia: Due to paclitaxel and often co-exist, usually Grade 1 or 2. Management consists of prescribing NSAIDs and reassuring patient that it is self-limiting.

References:

SPC Paclitaxel

SPC Gemcitabine

Albain K et al, JCO 2008 26(24):3950-7 Gemcitabine plus paclitaxel

NICE Clinical Guideline on Advanced Breast Cancer, Updated 2017

Issue Date: 20 th April 2021 Review Date: April 2024	Page 5 of 5	Protocol reference: MPHAPAGEBR
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