



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE



MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION LIST

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FROM: AFMOA/CC
110 Luke Avenue, Room 400
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2/2/97

SUBJECT: Use of Anorectic Drugs in Air Force Facilities

Anorectic Drugs such as Fenfluramine Hydrochloride (Pondimin™), Phentermine (Ionamin™) and Dexfenfluramine Hydrochloride (Redux™) are not approved for the Triservice Formulary and are not recommended as standard stock items in Air Force pharmacies.

Although pharmacotherapy cannot be recommended for routine use in obese patients, it may be helpful in selected cases where the perceived benefits outweigh the risk (JAMA, December 18, 1996-Vol 276, No. 23). For example, these drugs may be used in carefully selected overweight patients with comorbid risk factors (hypertension, insulin resistance, or severe dyslipidemias). In these situations, drug therapy should be combined with continuous behavioral modification, monthly provider follow-up, dietary counseling, and an appropriate aerobic exercise program. Only a small proportion of active duty members currently on the weight management program are expected to be eligible for this form of pharmacotherapy.

Serious adverse effects of anorectic drugs include primary pulmonary hypertension (PPH) which may not be reversible. Initial studies have confirmed that the risk of PPH greatly increases after 3 months of anorectic drug usage. Long-term use of these drugs, therefore, is generally inappropriate. Neurotoxic effects are a concern and further studies of subtle neuropsychological changes are needed.

At a minimum, patients meeting the above criteria should receive an initial history, physical examination, and screening tests. Screening tests should include a CBC, ultrasensitive TSH, lipid panel, and fasting blood sugar. If truncal obesity is prominent an overnight dexamethasone suppression test may be indicated.

Use of this drug should not delay or preclude any administrative action otherwise indicated for active duty members who are either on or entering the Weight Management Program.

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