

## Article published 21st October 2014 in Newspaper NRC Handelsblad and translated via Google translate

*Our editor*

*Enzo van Steenberghe*

**Amsterdam.** There has been long something strange going on at the hospital of the VU Medical Centre in Amsterdam. Patients with chronic bowel disease can get a box of drugs that says it is for cancer patients. A dangerous cancer drug, can be read on the box. There is a special tablets breaker at, because the pills may not be touched with the hands, read patients in the leaflet. It makes them afraid, because they do not have cancer. They really have to take these pills, they say at the pharmacy.

The Medicines Evaluation Board decided to stop this curious situation yesterday. 6-Thioguanine, in short called 6TG, the name of the anticancer drug, may now be officially issued as medications for chronic bowel patients, for example in Crohn's disease.

Medical specialists already discovered years ago that the substances in 6TG were very suitable to treat certain groups bowel patients. It is used for already ten years, but was never registered for IBD treatment.

Now, with the conditional approval of the Evaluation Board, the drug will presented to the patient as official IBD treatment medicine.

The only thing that does not change, the drug itself.

It is an important statement in a process that is seen in the world of medication dispensing as a showcase.

"Responsible person Mr Frans-Joseph Sinjorgo, a Dutch care entrepreneur. Sinjorgo has been more than ten years medical sales representative for a major drug developer.

In this function he was always surprised about the shadow world that originated in the medication dispensing.

He sees doctors who prescribe drugs to patients for many other indications. This is called in jargon "off-label" and is common: according to the inspection healthcare is about half of all medications prescribed in the Netherlands actually developed for other than the patient's ailment.

Anti-depression medications that are used as analgesics, antiepileptic drugs that are used in nerve damage, and so are dozens of examples.

This often provides good medical results, but the disadvantage that the leaflet is not true and that patients sometimes scare the drug box is not right.

More important : They did not have the safety and side effects studies which are mandatory for new drugs.

The decision of the Medicines Evaluation Board in the case Sinjorgo means according to experts,, a breakthrough "in medicament pocket. The main reason: the route followed Sinjorgo, provides an example of 'old drugs' that can be re-registered. This is an inexpensive way to give patients new medication and innovate in hospitals and pharmacies.

6TG example is a treatment, almost half cheaper than standard treatments. If it was as a leukemia drug rarely used; foregot patients is a lively market.

Mr Peter the Braal, pharmaceutical care purchasing manager at insurer Achmea: „ This case serves a social interest. It is a major breakthrough!!

Favié Martin, president of the advocacy of generics manufacturers:.” Sinjorgo shows that there are opportunities for re-development of medications. For the patient is important because it allows for cheaper drugs, a good leaflet and good medicine research. "

The Dutch drug package contains a total of about 16,000 registered drugs, including 4,000 homeopathic medicines.

Sinjorgo,, speaks of a gold mine "to be broken up. The Braal of insurer Achmea and also drug manufacturer Favié think that many potentially useful medication are not used.

But no one can know how big the 'goldmine' is predicted. The Braal: „ Now 6TG gets a new record, we have to seriously look at new uses of old drugs. We'll just see how big the potential is. "

Why is it so difficult to give a drug a new sticker and redevelop for another disease? That is obvious: money.

A recovery model does not exist. That's because an old drug is off patent.

A new record does not mean a new patent. Favié: „ When major drug companies see that the old drug for another ailment may be used they can go to, and is the developer lost its market. Old drugs are not re-developed; there is nothing to deserve. "

It causes a peculiar situation in the medication dispensing.

Potentially useful old drugs remain on the shelf, while some new medication is made which is very replaceable products. The care purchasing manager Braal outlines with an example. This year, the seventh TNF-alpha inhibitor is placed on the market. That is to use a drug that patients with an auto-immune disease. The Braal: „ All these seven drugs have the same effect. Yet another new alpha inhibitor is totally unnecessary. Innovation in the wrong way. " The problem, according Braal patients little insight on the price of medicines.

The re-registration of the cancer care entrepreneur Sinjorgo has taken seven years. He started it in 2007 and then suffered from chronic underestimation. Sinjorgo: „ We really thought we do this here. We hang another sticker on it. "But that was totally not easy. We were forced to do safety and effectiveness tests. The VUmc, led by medical specialist Proff Chris Mulder, held results in patient groups at all - off-label - 6TG were prescribed.

Because that was the strange situation: safety and efficacy study was never done, while doctors the drug already indicated their patients, because they had learned in practice, it works well.

Sinjorgo interested the pharmaceutical company Teva Pharmachemie to invest in the project. Several jars he fumbled a few million together for investigations. It gave yesterday, after seven years, the green light from the College Medicines Evaluation. That lead to a real breakthrough in re-development of medicines.

6TG is now officially a drug for bowel patients. The way is open for re-development of other medicines. The health care purchasing manager Braal Achmea: „ Sinjorgo is Don Quichote. Now we need to use this blueprint for other medications. It is ultimately the patient. Who wants a not too expensive medication, with a good leaflet. "