Guidelines for the use of quetiapine modified release (Seroquel XL®)

Modified release quetiapine (Seroquel XL®) is a once-a-day formulation that is available in addition to the standard release formulation of quetiapine. It should only be used when the standard formulation is considered unsuitable; ie:

- patients at high risk of adverse effects to quetiapine (e.g. orthostatic hypotension)
- patients experiencing adverse effects that are related to peak concentrations on twice a day quetiapine (e.g. sedation and somnolence).
- patients with clinical conditions requiring faster titration to target dose.
- patients where once a day dosing will improve concordance

Note: Quetiapine XL is not suitable for patients who need the tablets to be crushed. The modified release nature of the drug is completely dependent upon the tablet being swallowed whole. If tablets need to be crushed, then the standard release formulation and dosing schedule should be used.

Currently quetiapine XL has similar or lower costs compared to standard release quetiapine. However, the patent for standard release quetiapine (Seroquel®) is due to expire in 2012 and less expensive generic versions of the standard release formulation are likely to become available. For this reason, patients who are stable and compliant with quetiapine twice a day regimes should NOT be automatically switched to the XL preparation.

Licensed indications
(both standard release and modified release formulations)
- Schizophrenia
- Treatment of manic episodes associated with bipolar disorder
- Treatment of major depressive episodes associated with bipolar disorder
- Prevention of mania & depression in bipolar disorder

Dosage recommendations
See SPC/BNF for details of dosage schedules.
Quetiapine modified release tablets should be taken without food, at least one hour before a meal. Quetiapine standard release tablets can be taken with or without food.

Monitoring
Precautions, adverse effects and monitoring requirements are the same for both formulations. As with other antipsychotic agents, patients on quetiapine should be observed for signs and symptoms of hyperglycaemia. Weight should be monitored regularly. The modified release formulation currently has a black triangle and all suspected adverse reactions should be reported to the CHM.

References
BNF 61 March 2011