



Cardiovascular News Update

Dear Colleague,

Westside Medical Associates of Los Angeles (WMALA) in conjunction with Westside Medical Imaging (WMI) would like to provide you with this weekly update on important new developments in cardiovascular care.

Data on Avandia's heart risks still "inconclusive." WebMD (7/6, Hitti) reports, "Data on the type 2 diabetes drug Avandia's [rosiglitazone] overall heart risks are 'inconclusive,'" according to research published in the July 5 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. While the "researchers note that they can't tell yet if there is an association between Avandia and heart attacks or Avandia and heart disease in general," they "report an association between Avandia and heart failure, with more than twice as many heart failure cases in patients taking Avandia vs. other types of diabetes drugs." The "study is accompanied by three editorials," all of which "conclude that uncertainty remains about Avandia's effects on heart health." In a recent review of the findings of Nissen et al, Drs. Lepor and McCullough reported in the Spring issue of *Reviews in Cardiovascular Medicine* that at this point there is no evidence of an increase in risk of cardiovascular death or myocardial infarction with the use of Avandia though there does seem to be a heightened risk of heart failure exacerbation.

Doctors now recognize dangers of atrial fibrillation. In the New York Times (7/7, Feder) reported, Physicians have viewed atrial fibrillation as relatively benign because the most common symptoms -- palpitations, dizziness, and shortness of breath -- were tolerable and often short-lived. "Doctors now recognize that atrial fibrillation allows blood to pool in the atria and form clots, which in turn may explain why such patients are prone to strokes and heart attacks." Approximately "a third of strokes in patients 80 years or older are attributable to atrial fibrillation, and such strokes are more likely to be deadly than other types, according to studies summarized by Dr. Andrew E. Epstein, a researcher at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, at a meeting of heart rhythm specialists last month in Denver." Also, according to some research, the "added burden that inefficient atrial pumping puts on the ventricles, may contribute over time to heart failure." In many patients, atrial fibrillation is not associated with symptoms leaving the unsuspecting patient at risk for peripheral embolization. The fact that atrial fibrillation may be causal of stroke in many patients underlies the importance of chronic, uninterrupted anticoagulation in this patient population.

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Opinions differ on when heart patients should call an ambulance. UPI (7/7) reported, "Heart patients with chest pain are given conflicting advice for when to call an ambulance, and many die as a result," according to some British doctors. "In a debate in this week's *British Medical Journal*, physicians decried the lack of clear-cut advice about what constitutes a serious heart attack and how to determine when one is taking place." While "one study showed that the median time from onset of symptoms to cardiac arrest is 10 minutes, the British Heart Foundation advises patients with known heart disease to call an ambulance if chest pains last longer than 15 minutes and they have used sublingual nitrate spray three times during that period to relieve their symptoms." However, "the American College of Cardiology recommends one spray and five minutes



before calling an ambulance." UPI added, "In an editorial on the controversy, the journal staff recommended that high-risk cardiac patients carry their spray with them at all times, to take two metered doses immediately if they get chest pain, and if the pain has not subsided in five minutes, to call an ambulance. They advised against calling a friend or relative or trying to drive themselves to the hospital."

Study finds intensive statin therapy may reduce cardiovascular risks in elderly.

MedPage Today (7/4, Osterweil) reported, "Intensive statin therapy can reduce the risk of major cardiovascular events in patients 65 and older," according to research published in the July 3 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. "Among nearly 4,000 such patients, those randomized to 80 mg of atorvastatin (Lipitor) had a 2.3 percent reduction in absolute risk of a major cardiovascular event compared with similar patients on a 10-mg dose, reported cardiologist Nanette K. Wenger, M.D., of Emory University, and colleagues there and at other centers." According to the researchers, "This translated into a relative risk reduction of 19 percent." The researchers said, "Our analysis, which involves two active therapies, extends the findings of previous placebo-controlled studies, and, consistent with current American College of Cardiology and American Heart Association secondary prevention recommendations, suggests that additional clinical benefit can be achieved by aggressively treating older patients to reduce LDL cholesterol levels to less than 2.6 mmol/L."

Small amounts of dark chocolate may benefit heart.

Bloomberg (7/4, Lopatto) reported, "Patients who each day ate 6.3 grams of dark chocolate...reduced their blood pressure after 18 weeks, according to a study" published in the July 4 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. "Patients were randomly assigned to receive 30 calories of either white or dark chocolate, and were asked to discontinue otherwise eating chocolate for the duration of the study. The people eating the dark chocolate experienced a drop in blood pressure without any weight gain." The researchers found that "the 22 patients who received dark chocolate had an average reduction of 2.9 millimeters of mercury in their systolic blood pressure and 1.9 millimeters in diastolic blood pressure. In addition, the number of patients with hypertension declined to 68 percent from 86 percent." Matthew Sorrentino, a cardiologist at the University of Chicago Medical Center, and a spokesman for the American College of Cardiology, said, "I would use this as part of a well-balanced diet." He added, "We know there are good nutrients in a small amount of dark chocolate, but there should also be a lot of fiber, fruits and vegetables, and little sodium in your diet. These all help blood pressure."

[Westside Medical Associates of Los Angeles \(WMALA\) and Westside Medical Imaging \(WMI\) are premier centers in cardiac diagnosis and treatment. Please feel free to contact Norman Lepor MD, Hooman Madyoon MD or Ivor Geft MD at \(310\) 289-9955 or check our website at \[www.westsidemedimaging.com\]\(http://www.westsidemedimaging.com\).](#)

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