

pharmacy news

Coming events

11-14 March APP2010 Guild national conference on the Gold Coast. Visit www.appconference.com for further information.

14 March PSA workshop at Horsham Golf Club Sunday 14 March "Drug dependence" by Irvine Newton RSVP by 12 March 2010 Bianca p: 5381 9247 or Carlie p: 5381 2093.

14 March PSA event Sunday Learning Seminar: First Aid for Depression and Suicide at DOXA School Building Bendigo. RSVP by 10 March 2010 Clive Custance 5443 1330.

20-21 March PSA weekend at Cumberland Resort Lorne Theme: Sexual Health. Visit PSA website www.psa.org.au for further information and to register.

29 April Combined West Vic Medication Review Group and Mallee Division RSVP Kerri p: 5381 1756.

Effect of statins on heart failure

A meta-analysis of 10 placebo-controlled randomised trials of 10,192 patients featured in the American Journal of Cardiology has found that statins have differing effects on heart failure (HF) outcomes. Overall, statins did not affect all-cause or cardiovascular mortality but did significantly decrease hospitalisation for worsening HF. Patients taking statins had a significant increase in left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF). Post hoc analyses showed differences between statins and demonstrated that atorvastatin decreased all-cause mortality and hospitalisation for worsening HF, and randomisation to atorvastatin and simvastatin led to a significant improvement in LVEF whereas these benefits were not observed in patients on rosuvastatin.

Am J Cardiol 2009;104:1708-1716

Mortality in asthma from LABA monotherapy

There was debate over the safety of salmeterol in asthma, as the SMART study and a case control study suggested an increased risk of death. This new analysis looked at all randomised controlled trial data available to the manufacturer (GSK) – and included 215 studies of 106,575 subjects. Overall odds ratio (OR) for asthma death with salmeterol was 2.7 (95% CI, 1.4 to 5.3). The OR for asthma death in placebo-controlled studies was 7.3 (95% CI, 1.8 to 29.4), and where concomitant ICS were used the OR was 2.1 (95% CI, 0.6 to 7.9). There were 22,600 patients treated with salmeterol + fluticasone combination - no asthma deaths occurred in this group. Conclusion: use of salmeterol alone in patients with asthma is associated with an increased risk of death, however this is reduced when it is used in combination with inhaled corticosteroids.

Thorax 2010; 65: 39-43

Mediterranean diet leads to reduced stomach cancer risk

A new study shows that greater adherence to a relative Mediterranean diet is associated with a 33% lower risk for gastric adenocarcinoma. The Mediterranean diet has a high intake of fruit, nuts, fibre, seeds, vegetables, olive oil, a moderate intake of wine and a low intake of red meat and processed meats. The foods rich in antioxidants may help prevent cancer, such as vitamin C, carotenoids, phenols and flavonoids. 485,044 participants aged 35 to 70 years from 10 European countries provided dietary and lifestyle information during the 8.9 year study. As the 5 year relative survival rate is very poor (23%), it is important to identify dietary recommendations that can help reduce incidence of this cancer. *Am J Clin Nutr. Published online 9 December 2009*

Two cows are standing next to each other in a field. Daisy says to Dolly, 'I was artificially inseminated this morning.' 'I don't believe you,' says Dolly. 'It's true, no bull!' exclaims Daisy.

Frequent green tea intake linked to lower depression rates in elderly

More frequent consumption of green tea is associated with a lower prevalence of depressive symptoms in the community-dwelling older population, according to the results of a recent Japanese study. 1058, community-dwelling, elderly Japanese subjects 70 years or older who widely consumed green tea were administered a questionnaire to determine green tea intake. The Geriatric Depression Scale was used to evaluate depressive symptoms. Drinking 4 or more cups of green tea per day was associated with a 44% relative reduction in mild and severe depressive symptoms. A possible confounding factor was that people who drank green tea were also more likely to be active and healthy compared to those who were not assessed. *Am J Clin Nutr. 2009;90:1615-1622*

Ginkgo biloba not beneficial for dementia

Ginkgo biloba extract (ginkgo) is promoted as being helpful for memory disorders. The US Ginkgo Evaluation of Memory (GEM) study, reported in November 2008, found no benefit for ginkgo in Alzheimer's and all-cause dementia. 3,069 participants aged 75 and over were from multiple centres in the US and had normal cognitive function or mild cognitive impairment, were not being treated with any drug therapy that could cause confusion and had no contra-indications to ginkgo treatment. They were randomised to ginkgo extract 120 mg twice daily versus placebo and followed six-monthly. Further analysis from this trial, undertaken over a six-year period, has now found that taking ginkgo biloba extract did not affect the rate of cognitive decline in elderly people. Adverse event profiles were similar in the active and placebo groups. *JAMA 2009; 302: 2663-70 published 4/1/2010*

Support line for small business

Small business owners adversely affected by the economic downturn may access the support of advisors who may assist or refer you on for issues such as business planning, loans, Government initiatives and grants, regulations, stress and hardship. The line operates Monday to Friday 8 am to 8 pm and is closed on public holidays p: 1800 777 275 e: sbsl@innovation.gov.au or w: www.business.gov.au

Interaction: warfarin with pomegranate juice

A patient was taking warfarin for a mitral valve replacement and presented with a swollen left calf and an INR of 14. He reported he had been drinking pomegranate juice. Laboratory studies have shown that pomegranate juice inhibits key cytochrome P450 enzymes involved in warfarin metabolism and thereby provides a mechanism for this potential interaction. It would be prudent to advise your patients to avoid pomegranate juice whilst on warfarin.

Emerg Med J 2010 27: 74-75

Varenicline safe in stable CVD

According to research published early online in *Circulation*, varenicline is effective for smoking cessation in smokers with stable cardiovascular disease. A randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial compared the efficacy and safety of varenicline (1 mg twice daily) (n=355) with placebo (n=359) for smoking cessation in smokers with stable cardiovascular disease. All patients also received smoking cessation counselling for 12 weeks and follow up lasted one year. The continuous abstinence rate was higher for varenicline than placebo during weeks 9 through 12 (odds ratio 6.11) and weeks 9 through 52 (odds ratio 3.14). There was no significant difference in cardiovascular mortality or serious adverse events. The researchers also concluded that more research is needed before it can be safely prescribed to patients with CHD with co-morbid depression and unstable cardiovascular disease. *Circulation 2010, published online 4/1/2010*

Tiotropium looks safe in CVD

There has been a suggestion of a link between use of inhaled anticholinergic drugs in COPD and increased cardiovascular mortality for several years, despite the limited systemic bioavailability of these drugs. A study assessed cardiovascular events in the clinical trial safety database for tiotropium. There were 30 eligible trials including 19,545 patients (8,699 receiving placebo and

10,846 receiving tiotropium). Incidence rates for the cardiovascular end points were 2.15 (tiotropium) and 2.67 (placebo) per 100 patient-years giving a relative risk of 0.83. Authors concluded that in the trial population, tiotropium was not associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular events. *Chest 2010; 137: 13-19*

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced on 14 January 2010 that data from a recent review of the Spiriva HandiHaler, a long-acting respiratory treatment for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), do not support an increased risk of stroke, heart attack or death in patients using the medicine. From

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/DrugSafetyInformationforHealthcareProfessionals/ucm197429.htm>

Inhaled corticosteroids not detrimental to bone in COPD

There is some concern over the potential adverse effects of inhaled corticosteroids (ICS) on bone health in patients with COPD. Analysis of data from the TORCH study found a high rate of osteoporosis in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), however treatment with fluticasone did not affect incidence over a three-year period. Bone mineral density (BMD) for the hip and lumbar spine was obtained at baseline and repeated yearly thereafter. The fall in measured BMD at three years was small with no significant differences between any of the active treatment groups and placebo, and no significant difference in fracture incidence. *Chest 2009; 136: 1456-65*

Alcohol intake linked to coronary heart disease

Despite health guidelines advising no more than two standard drinks alcoholic daily, a new study confirms that alcohol significantly increases risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) in men. A Spanish trial of 41,000 people over 10 years found men aged 29-69 who had moderate, high or very high alcohol intakes were at least 50% more likely to develop CHD than non drinkers. Low alcohol intake was associated with a 35% decrease in risk. The type of alcoholic drink did not affect results. A standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol. Low alcohol intake is defined as less than 5 g alcohol daily; moderate: 5-30 g daily; high: 30-90 g daily; and very high: > 90 g daily. *Heart 2009 online*

UK research into antipsychotics in elderly demented

A review of the use of antipsychotics in the elderly in the UK has estimated that 180,000 dementia patients were administered antipsychotics each year with 144,000 cases being of no benefit. 1620 cerebrovascular adverse events (e.g. strokes) and 1800 deaths resulted from administration of these drugs. Non-pharmacological strategies such as environmental triggers for behaviours, staff training and utilisation of therapies such as pet or music therapy can be very helpful. GPs are put under pressure to prescribe these drugs by staff, families and other residents or their families.

Intensive glycaemic control did not cause death in ACCORD study

The intensive control arm of the ACCORD study tested whether intensive glycaemic control in high-risk patients with type-2 diabetes would reduce adverse cardiovascular outcomes. The trial was stopped early after mean follow-up of 3.5 years due to increased mortality in the intensive-control group. Two analyses investigated the extent, if any, to which severe hypoglycaemia might have contributed to the adverse outcome and what factors could be identified that might predict increased risk of severe hypoglycaemia. The first analysis investigated whether there was a link between severe, symptomatic hypoglycaemia and mortality. Authors concluded that severe, symptomatic, hypoglycaemia was not responsible for the difference in mortality between the study groups. The second analysis examined whether demographic variables, baseline control and overall degree of control (according to HbA1c levels) were associated with the risk of severe hypoglycaemia. Authors concluded that initial improvements in glycaemic control indicated by a greater initial drop in HbA1c were not associated with increased risk of hypoglycaemia. The reverse applied, suggesting that where patients do not appear to respond to increased therapy, treatment should not be further intensified until it is confirmed that patients understand and are compliant with their treatment.

New warnings for Spiriva

Immediate hypersensitivity reactions, including angioedema (including swelling of the lips, tongue or throat), itching or rash may occur after administration of Spiriva. As atropine has a similar structural formula to tiotropium, patients with a history of hypersensitivity to atropine should also be closely monitored for hypersensitivity to Spiriva. Spiriva should be used with caution in patients with narrow-angle glaucoma. Look for signs and symptoms of eye pain or discomfort, blurred vision, visual halos or colored images with red eyes. If any of these reactions occur, cease Spiriva and advise the patient to see their GP for management and alternative treatment. Spiriva should be used with caution in patients with severe hypersensitivity to milk proteins. From <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/SafetyInformation/ucm197127.htm>

Adverse reactions with Januvia

There have been postmarketing reports of acute pancreatitis, including fatal and non-fatal pancreatitis, in patients taking Januvia. If suffering with persistent severe abdominal pain, sometimes radiating to the back, possibly accompanied by vomiting, patients should promptly discontinue Januvia and contact their doctor. From <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/SafetyInformation/ucm196611.htm>

New 'e-chamber' spacer for inhalers at WHCG Horsham hospital

The 'e-chamber' from Bird Healthcare is to be used at Wimmera Health Care Group, Horsham hospital from February 2010. It is a large volume spacer for single patient use only and can be used by that patient for up to 6 months, when it should be discarded. It can be safely incinerated or recycled into plastic garbage recycling. Made from antistatic polypropylene, it does not require priming before use, unlike other spacers. A mask is being developed for use with the e-chamber. A low cost price (\$3.95), and because this spacer has been independently assessed by Perth researchers and found to be as effective as other spacers, makes this spacer a logical choice for a base hospital emergency department.

Asthma improved with playing didgeridoo

Playing the didgeridoo is a successful intervention for asthma in Aboriginal boys, new research shows. In a program run by the University of Southern Queensland, regular didgeridoo lessons for school-age boys resulted in an increase in FEV values. Previous studies have shown the benefits of wind instruments to treat asthma, and a Swiss study in 2006 showed the didgeridoo obtained some results in those with obstructive sleep apnoea. Because it is against the culture of many Aboriginals for girls to touch the didgeridoo, the girls instead underwent singing lessons and voice exercises. They showed no respiratory benefit but both groups reported an improvement in their health and knowledge of their asthma and symptoms.

Aust J Rural Health (26: 100-104)

Death from excessive TV

Data from the AusDiab study in *Circulation* (online 11 January) show that watching TV for more than four hours a day is associated with a 50% increased risk of all-cause mortality and 80% higher risk of cardiovascular mortality.

MMS causes kidney failure

A woman has died after ingesting 'Miracle Mineral Solution' (MMS) that contains chlorine dioxide solution which is sold online by several Australian companies as a cure for AIDS, malaria, cancer, asthma and arthritis. The key ingredient, sodium chlorite, can cause kidney failure and methemoglobinemia, a condition in which red blood cells do not bind with oxygen. Both can be fatal. A chemical plant in South Australia is being used to manufacture the product, likened to concentrated bleach, which is freely available in Australia and was responsible for at least three hospital admissions in NSW last year. The TGA is investigating.

Good article on treatment for heart failure

Can be found at <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/362/3/228>