



March 11, 2008

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.

Study suggests women less likely to be screened and then treated for coronary artery disease: A call to action

Women with coronary artery disease are less likely to receive treatment with statins, aspirin, and beta-blockers than men with the condition, according to a study scheduled to be published in the journal *Gender Medicine*. Researchers from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago looked at 304 men and women with coronary artery disease. Less than 80 percent of the women received statin therapy compared with 91 percent of the men. With coronary artery disease killing 10 times as many women as breast cancer, it is important that they be availed of both diagnostics and treatments. Current SHAPE guidelines recommend screening for coronary artery disease in women with any risk factors for coronary artery disease over the age of 55 years. Most commonly used screening modalities include coronary calcium screening, CT coronary angiography and carotid intimal medial thickness assessment.

FDA finds heparin-mimicking substance in heparin vials may be responsible for injuries.

Federal drug regulators said Wednesday that a critical blood thinner that had been linked to at least 19 deaths and whose raw components were produced in China contained a possibly counterfeit ingredient that mimicked the real drug. Investigators had to rely on sophisticated magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) tests to discover that as much as 20 percent of the product's active ingredient was a heparin mimic blended in with the real thing. Baxter, which supplied half of the heparin used in U.S. clinical settings, first recalled some of its heparin products on Jan. 17 before expanding the recall on Feb. 27 to include all of its multidose, single-dose and Hep-Lock products, used to flush intravenous lines to ensure that they aren't occluded by blood clots.

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Study suggests heavy snoring may be associated with an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

Heavy snorers are significantly more likely to have a heart attack or stroke compared to the rest of the population, according to a study published in the journal *Sleep*. For the study, Hungarian scientists interviewed approximately 12,000 people. The researchers found that, compared to the rest of the population, loud snorers had a 34 percent increased risk of having a heart attack, and a 67 percent greater chance of suffering a stroke. However, according to the researchers, those who snore quietly have no increase in their risk of heart problems.

Hold on to Your Wallet: Private contractors attempt to find overpayments, underpayments to Medicare.

In the coming weeks, private audit companies will be attempting to determine if healthcare providers erred when billing Medicare and require them to return any overpayments to the federal government. These companies will keep a tidy percentage for their services. The contractors have, in three years, returned more than \$300 million to the federal government in the three states where the pilot program has been in operation. This program will soon be operational nationwide. Those critical of the program argue that contractors have too much incentive to question as many claims as possible, as they keep about 20 percent of the overpayments. So far, California has been one of the three pilot states where this has been studied. Many California physicians have been impacted by this already and have been put in a position of “guilty till proven innocent”

Study suggests aspirin may not provide a significant mortality benefit for diabetes patients after ACS.

According to research published in *Diabetes Care*, aspirin is not useful as a secondary preventive agent in patients with diabetes after acute coronary syndrome (ACS), providing no significant survival benefit. Dr. Mark T. Kearney and colleagues looked at data from 2499 patients. The researchers found that while aspirin therapy reduced mortality by 48 percent in nondiabetic subjects, for patients "with diabetes, no significant mortality benefit was noted.

Research suggests curcumin found in curry spices may help prevent heart failure.

Curcumin, an ingredient in the curry spice turmeric, may help prevent heart failure, according to two studies published in the February edition of the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*. Researchers in both studies gave the ingredient to rats. The researchers found that the rats that were given curcumin showed more resistance to heart failure and inflammation than comparison groups of rats that didn't get curcumin. Furthermore, the researchers in one of the studies saw signs that curcumin treatment reversed heart enlargement.

Westside Medical Associates of Los Angeles (WMALA) and Westside Medical Imaging (WMI) are premier centers in cardiac diagnosis and treatment.

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