



May 15, 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.

Senate Expected to Vote on Medicare Physician Cuts in Early June

The Senate is expected to vote in early June on Medicare legislation to halt the scheduled 10.6 percent physician payment cut. Physicians are urged to contact their senators and ask them to support 18 months of positive Medicare physician payments, and ask them not to use cuts to medical imaging payments to offset new costs. To contact your senators, call the ACC's toll-free Grassroots Hotline at (800) 210-7193.

Tibial Calcium Score on MultiSlice CT score may identify PAD patients at high risk for amputation.

According to a study published study, the tibial artery calcification (TAC) score, assessed by multidetector CT, can identify patients with peripheral arterial disease (PAD) who are at high risk for amputation. This conclusion is based on a study of 118 patients with symptomatic PAD and 111 community volunteers without symptomatic PAD, using arterial Doppler and multislice CT of the lower extremities. An analysis revealed that the TAC score was a better predictor of amputation than the ankle-brachial index (ABI). Both TAC and ABI are available at Westside Medical Associates of Los Angeles and Westside Medical Imaging for patients with suspected peripheral arterial disease.

Beta blocker may increase risk of stroke, study suggests.

Patients given the beta blocker Toprol XL (metoprolol succinate) "to reduce heart risks before surgery were one-third more likely to die within a month and had double the risk of stroke compared with those given a" placebo, according to a study published in The Lancet. Researchers studied 8,351 patients at risk for cardiac complications who were having non-cardiac surgery and found that the drug more than doubled the threat of stroke and increased the likelihood of death by about 33 percent. The authors concluded that although the drug reduced the chance of a heart attack, the increased possibilities for death and stroke may outweigh its usefulness.

Some physicians may not be screening all patients' blood pressure.

A new study finds a lack of routine blood pressure screening in doctor's offices and a low percentage of hypertension patients actually meeting their blood pressure goals after diagnosis. Researchers examined analyzed data from a federal 2003-04 survey of services performed in offices of private U.S. physicians and discovered that in these offices blood

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pressure was taken in only 56 percent of all patient visits, and in 93 percent of visits by patients diagnosed with hypertension. Furthermore, only 39 percent of patients being treated for hypertension were at the recommended blood pressure levels.

Obese individuals may face increased heart risks despite higher use of hypertension and cholesterol drugs.

Daily doses of statins and blood pressure medications will not be enough to prevent heart disease among the ever-growing number of Baby Boomers who are overweight or obese," according to a study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine. All participants were free of heart disease at the beginning of the study and were evaluated for the presence of traditional risk factors such as weight, LDL cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, and diabetes. They also looked for signs of subclinical heart disease, such as coronary artery calcium on CT, carotid intimal medial thickening (IMT), and increased heart muscle mass on ECHO. When compared to normal-weight people who had the same traditional risk factors for heart disease, obese people had more advanced signs of subclinical heart disease and even though they took more medications for hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes, obese participants had higher blood pressure and blood sugar levels and more abnormal cholesterol profiles than non-obese participants. In order to help combat obesity, WMALA offers comprehensive assessments for subclinical disease including carotid IMT, coronary artery calcium assessments, CT coronary angiography and ECHO. In addition, to assist your patients in need of weight loss, WMALA offers nutritional counseling with Vickie Nussbaum. Please contact our office at 310-289-9955 for additional information.

Obesity may cause prolonged inflammation of heart tissue.

Obesity causes prolonged inflammation of heart tissue that increases heart failure risk, according to a study published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology. Obese participants had higher blood levels of key immune system proteins involved in inflammation including interleukin 6, C-reactive protein, and fibrinogen than non-obese participants.

B vitamins, folic acid do not lower cardiovascular risk in women.

Giving B vitamins and folic acid supplements to reduce high levels of a blood protein that is a marker for heart disease did nothing to protect women from heart trouble, according to a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The researchers concluded, "Our results are consistent with prior randomized trials performed primarily among men with established vascular disease and do not support the use of folic acid and B vitamin supplements as preventive interventions for cardiovascular disease" despite an 18.5 percent reduction in homocysteine levels.

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

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