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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.

Erectile dysfunction (ED) predicts heart disease in patients with diabetes and may warrant coronary artery screening

For men with type 2 diabetes, (ED) is a powerful early warning sign for serious heart disease. In one study researchers found that among 291 men with type 2 diabetes, those who also had ED had twice the risk of suffering a heart attack, stroke or other cardiovascular complication over the next four years." In a second study among diabetic men with no indications of heart disease at the outset, those with ED were 58 percent more likely to die of heart disease, or have a heart attack or other non-fatal cardiac event. ED precedes and is therefore predictive of future cardiovascular problems. In 2,306 male patients with diabetes with no overt evidence of heart disease for four years, the incidence of ED was 26.7%. For every 1,000 men, 19.7 with ED developed heart disease each year, including a heart attack, chest pain, heart surgery, or death from cardiac complications, compared with 9.5 per 1,000 without it.

A 2nd study showed that of 300 men who had both diabetes and were in the early stages of developing heart disease, 118 had erectile dysfunction at the beginning of the study, and over the next four years, these were twice as likely to suffer a 'major cardiac event' such as a heart attack or stroke.

With cardiovascular disease responsible for nearly 80% of cases, it is important to screen patients in multiple vascular territories including the coronary arteries with coronary calcium screening, lower extremity with exercise "ankle-brachial index" (ABI) and carotid arteries with intimal-medial thickening (IMT). These screening modalities are available at Westside Medical Associates of Los Angeles and Westside Medical Imaging.

Remote pacemaker monitoring available at Westside Medical Associates may catch problems earlier than standard transtelephonic monitoring

Monitoring pacemaker function with newer technology that allows a full download of device data from the patient's home may catch problems earlier than standard transtelephonic monitoring according to a study presented at the Heart Rhythm Society meeting. The researchers "randomized 897 patients with compatible pacemakers to transtelephonic transmissions every two months (plus six month in-office visits for those with dual chamber devices) or remote interrogation of their device to the Medtronic CareLink Network." All participants "got a baseline and 12-month evaluation in person." The researchers found that remote interrogation picked up about two-thirds of all events that needed clinical attention whereas with transtelephonic monitoring -- which transmits only electrocardiogram data - 98 percent of these events were not found until in-office visits.

Higher dose of statin improves outcomes in heart bypass patients.

Patients who have had heart bypass surgery, taking the cholesterol-lowering drug Lipitor at a dose of 80 milligrams per day, rather than 10 milligrams per day, experienced a reduction of major heart-related events by 27% and the need for repeat heart procedures by 30%.

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Study suggests elevated BP reading may not lead to additional hypertension treatment for some diabetes patients.

Only ½ of diabetes patients who have an elevated blood pressure (BP) reading during a routine check-up receive additional treatment for hypertension. Researchers tracked diabetic patients with elevated [BP] readings and found that only 49% received additional medication or a dosage adjustment or a plan to be followed-up within four weeks. According to the researchers, the main reason for lack of action appeared to be uncertainty over whether the blood pressure was actually elevated, which was caused by conflicting readings or reports from patients that a home reading was normal. We suggest that these patients undergo 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring to better assess their blood pressure status. This technology is available at WMALA.

Individuals with obstructive sleep apnea may face increased risk of cardiac stress during commercial air travel and may need oxygen

Flying on commercial flights may put people who suffer from obstructive sleep apnea at greater risk of cardiac stress, according to a study presented at the American Thoracic Society conference. The investigators discovered that people with obstructive sleep apnea had lower levels of oxygen in their blood during the simulated flight, even though they increased their breathing intensity at about the same rate as healthy people during the simulation. In addition, people with obstructive sleep apnea experienced higher heart rates and more demand for oxygen, compared with healthy people. The researchers concluded that patients with obstructive sleep apnea would require supplemental oxygen in-flight.

Adherence to antihypertensive medications is poor and may explain lack of efficacy

Half of patients given antihypertensive medication stop their treatment within the first year according to a study published in the British Medical Journal. Investigators analyzed data from 4,783 patients who were prescribed a once a day antihypertensive medication and found that on any day of treatment patients omitted about 10% of their scheduled doses. In addition, nearly 95% of the patients missed a single dose at least once a year; half of the patients missed a single day's dose at a rate of once a month; 48% of the patients took a drug holiday (>78 hours) at least once a year; and 13 percent had bi-monthly (six a year) drug holidays.

Statins associated with lower risk of atrial fibrillation in postmenopausal women with coronary disease.

Statins appear to be associated with a lower risk of atrial fibrillation in postmenopausal women with coronary disease. Investigators studied postmenopausal women with existing coronary disease, following them for an average of about four years and found that the odds of having atrial fibrillation at the start of the study was 65 percent lower among women taking statins. Furthermore, they found that the risk of developing atrial fibrillation during the study period was 55 percent lower in the statin group.

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

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