



# CARDIOVASCULAR NEWS

## 1. Coricidin II® suitable for hypertensive individuals

Following an approval by Health Canada, Coricidin II®, a new cold medication, can show on its label that it may be taken by people with high blood pressure. Coricidin II is a treatment that relieves cold and flu symptoms without containing a nasal decongestant, such as pseudoephedrine, which may not be appropriate for people with hypertension.

Until now, the 3.4 million Canadians suffering from hypertension who sought relief from cold and flu symptoms had no clearly labelled options. As a result, these individuals often suffered in silence, or used nasal preparations that brought little relief.

“During the cold season, hypertensive patients must take even greater care of their health, and should avoid cold medications that contain decongestants since, in some cases, [these] have been reported to increase blood pressure,” states Dr. Robert Petrella, president of the Canadian Coalition for High Blood Pressure Prevention and Control. Dr. Petrella cautions, “Hypertensive patients should consult their doctors before taking any medication that contains a nasal decongestant.”

Coricidin II®: New Cold and Flu Medication Approved by Health Canada to be Labelled as Appropriate for People with High Blood Pressure. Montreal (Quebec). February 9, 2004.

## 2. Pfizer creates Chair in atherosclerosis

In early February, the *Université de Montréal* announced the creation of the Pfizer Chair in atherosclerosis. This Chair will contribute to further research in the role of antioxidants and anti-inflammatories in the struggle against atherosclerosis.

The first recipient of the Chair is Dr. Jean-Claude Tardif, an associate professor at the faculty of medicine of the *Université de Montréal*, and director of the Research Centre at the Montreal Heart Institute (MHI). “The creation of this Chair is confirmation of the clinical and basic research expertise of the researchers at the MHI, and has special importance for the millions of Canadians affected by atherosclerosis,

the leading cause of death in Canada and the world,” said Robert Tessier, MHI chairman of the board.

Pfizer Canada Inc. is investing \$1.5 million, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research are providing \$350,000, for a grand total of \$1.85 million towards atherosclerosis research. The Chair’s work will be conducted at the MHI, where Dr. Tardif leads a research team of about 40 people.

Université de Montréal Creates the Pfizer Chair in Atherosclerosis. Montreal (Quebec). February 3, 2004.

## 3. Heart scans play role in predicting risk of heart disease

A new study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* could help make the computed tomography (CT) scan a standard tool in determining the heart condition of people at moderate risk.

“Making decisions on how to treat a patient who is not at high risk, but who is not necessarily at low risk, can be difficult,” stated Dr. Stanley Clark, director of electron beam tomography at Edward Heart Hospital in Illinois. “In fact, an estimated 20 to 30 million people at risk for developing coronary heart disease are not getting proper treatment. With the CT scan, doctors might be able to make faster, more aggressive treatment decisions, which can include medication or

just lifestyle changes.”

Researchers found that CT scans are most effective for people over 45, as these younger patients are typically at a lower risk.

While health insurers typically don't cover the cost of a CT scan, some plans do. If widely accepted, this new research may sway health insurers to cover the test if prescribed by a doctor, and make the test available to more people who can benefit from it.

New Study Increases Edward Heart Hospital Heart Scan's Role in Predicting Risk of Heart Attack or Cardiac Death. Naperville (Illinois, USA). January 15, 2004.

## 4. Erectile dysfunction may be first sign of general vascular disease

Rather than resulting from advanced disease, erectile dysfunction (ED) linked to vascular response often may be the first sign of abnormalities in blood vessel response elsewhere in the body, according to a new study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

This study compared 30 men in their mid-40s who had ED, but who were otherwise apparently healthy, with a control group of 27 age-matched men. Responses to flow-mediated vasodilation and nitroglycerin were significantly lower in the men with ED versus the control group. This indicates that the defect in the men with ED appears to be in the

smooth muscle surrounding blood vessels, as opposed to the endothelium.

“Not only is there a defect in the penile smooth muscle, there is also a defect in the smooth muscle in the brachial artery in the arm. So we think there is a systemic or generalized defect in the ability of the smooth muscle to relax in response to nitrates,” said Dr. Alan J. Bank of the St. Paul Heart Clinic in Minnesota. “We found that there are many men who have ED as their first symptom of blood vessel disease.” *PCard*

Erectile Dysfunction May Be First Sign of General Vascular Disease. Bethesda (Maryland, USA). January 13, 2004.