

Medical Briefs

An abridged look at current events in and around the health-care industry

Reducing “Bad” Cholesterol

Ezetrol™ (ezetimibe), a cholesterol absorption inhibitor, has been approved in Canada for the reduction of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and total cholesterol in patients with high cholesterol levels. The addition of Ezetrol, 10 mg/day, to ongoing statin monotherapy resulted in an additional 25% reduction in LDL cholesterol compared with a 4% reduction with the addition of placebo. In clinical trials, Ezetrol was well-tolerated, with a side-effect profile similar to placebo.

Implication: “Results of the co-administration studies show that Ezetrol provides a statistically significant reduction in LDL cholesterol compared to statins alone and at all doses of all statins tested,” says Dr. Rafik Habib, director of the Centre Cardiovasculaire de Laval. “This is important for physicians and their patients because, as the studies showed, initiating Ezetrol with the lowest dose of any statin achieves LDL cholesterol reductions similar to those seen with the highest dose of any statin alone.”

Ezetrol™, The First of a New Class of Cholesterol-Lowering Drugs in 15 Years, Approved by Health Canada. Press Release, Montreal, Quebec, June 18, 2003.

This Month:

1. Reducing “Bad” Cholesterol
2. Good News for People With Diabetes
3. Researcher Rewarded
4. Some Relief for Constipation

Good News for People With Diabetes

The University College of London has announced preliminary results from the Collaborative Atorvastatin Diabetes Study (CARDS), which showed that patients with diabetes who took Lipitor® (atorvastatin calcium) had significantly fewer heart attacks, strokes, and surgical procedures compared to patients who received placebo. Roughly 2,800 patients with Type 2 diabetes and no previous history of heart failure or stroke were treated with Lipitor, 10 mg/day, or placebo to compare the effectiveness in reducing major coronary events, strokes, or surgical revascularization procedures.

Implication: Dr. Joe Feczko, president of worldwide development at Pfizer, says “These interim results clearly show a cardiovascular benefit in lowering cholesterol levels in patients with diabetes.”

Patients Taking Pfizer’s Lipitor® Show Significant Cardiovascular Benefit. Press Release, Kirkland, Quebec, June 16, 2003.

Researcher Rewarded

Dr. Paul Thottingal from the University of Manitoba was the 2003 winner of the Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) Microbiology/Infectious Diseases (ID) Fellowship award. Dr. Thottingal is presently conducting his research in Nairobi, Kenya, under the supervision of Dr. Frank A. Plummer. His research is on the immune response to human immunodeficiency virus-1 in highly

exposed, uninfected sex workers. The award was officially announced during the Canadian Infectious Disease Society annual meeting in Quebec City. Dr. Joanne Embree, head of the medical microbiology department at the University of Manitoba, accepted the award on Dr. Thottingal's behalf.

The BMS ID Fellowship has been developed to help train and support future clinician researchers in Canada. One award of \$60,000 per year for three years is attributed each year by an independent selection committee of accomplished scientists to a young physician who has completed his training in microbiology/infectious diseases and who is committed to a career in research.

Press Release, Montreal, Quebec, May 30, 2003.



From left to right: Marc Robitaille, Dr. Coleman Rotstein, Dr. Nacia Faure, Dr. Joanne Embree, Patrick O'Leary, Paula Patrick.

Some Relief for Constipation

In a recent trial, Zelnorm[®] (tegaserod maleate) was found significantly more effective than placebo in providing rapid and sustained relief from chronic constipation during 12 weeks of therapy. This pivotal trial involved 1,348 patients and the results showed that Zelnorm provided relief of several chronic constipation symptoms, including abdominal discomfort or pain, bloating or distension, straining, and stool consistency.

Implication: Zelnorm is the first and only drug in the new serotonin receptor agonist class which can be used for the symptomatic treatment of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) in female patients whose main symptoms are constipation and abdominal pain. Its unique characteristics make it the only therapy currently available to rapidly alleviate the multiple symptoms of IBS. [Dx](#)

Study Shows Zelnorm[®] Effective and Well-Tolerated for Treating Chronic Constipation. Press Release, Orlando, Florida, May 28, 2003.