1. Oxeze® proven as safe as salbutamol

A new study shows that Oxeze® (formoterol), when used as a reliever medication, is superior to the the traditional reliever treatment, salbutamol, and shows a similar safety profile across a broad study population. The REal-LIfe EFfectiveness of Oxeze Turbuhaler® (RELIEF) study is the largest prospective asthma study ever carried out to assess the safety and effectiveness of a reliever medication. RELIEF shows that asthma patients using Oxeze Turbuhaler have fewer exacerbations, have more symptom-free days, and need fewer inhalations of reliever medication compared to those prescribed salbutamol.

How does it apply to your practice? "Patients want better control of their condition, but they also want to use less drug. The findings of this study show that patients using formoterol on an as-needed basis were closer to achieving this goal than those using salbutamol," said Dr. Romain Pauwels of the University Hospital in Belgium.

Oxeze® Proven as Safe as Gold Standard Salbutamol. Press Release, Mississauga, Ontario, November 24, 2003.

2. Asthma attacks reduced with Singulair®

Results of the PREvention of Virally Induced Asthma (PREVIA) study, a new international, large-scale clinical study, showed that young children aged two to five years, whose asthma is triggered by colds, experienced significantly fewer asthma attacks when treated with Singulair® (montelukast sodium) compared to placebo. The common cold is the most frequent trigger of asthma attacks in the young pediatric population, and there is currently no effective oral therapy for this condition.

How does it apply to your practice? "This is the first time an oral treatment option for asthma has shown to be effective at reducing childhood asthma attacks brought on by the common cold," said Dr. Jacques Simard, pediatrician at the Cité de la Santé in Laval, Quebec. "The PREVIA study showed that montelukast sodium reduced the rate of asthma attacks triggered by the common cold by 33%." Asthma is one of the most common chronic childhood diseases, affecting 10% to 15% of Canadian children, and is the leading cause of hospital admission for children. The common cold and upper respiratory infections, which are caused by viruses, account for up to 85% of childhood asthma attacks.

First Clinical Study of an Oral Treatment Shows Reduction in Asthma Attacks Triggered by Colds in Young Children. Press Release, Montreal, Quebec, November 20, 2003.

3. New data in atherosclerosis treatment

According to new data presented at the annual meeting of the American Heart Association, patients taking Lipitor® (atorvastatin calcium) experienced a significant reduction in the progression of atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, compared to patients who received pravastatin. The results from the Reversing Atherosclerosis with Aggressive Lipid Lowering (REVERSAL) study showed patients treated with atorvastatin calcium experienced a median 0.4% reduction in total plaque volume, while patients who received pravastatin showed a median 2.7% increase in total plaque volume.

How does it apply to your practice? "REVERSAL is an exciting study, as it clearly demonstrates the benefits of aggressive treatment with atorvastatin calcium in halting the progression of plaque buildup and reducing the risk of atherosclerosis," said Dr. Jean-Claude Tardif, director of clinical research at the Montreal Heart Institute. "The results are important to Canadians, as atherosclerosis is a condition that can lead to heart attack, stroke, angina, and death." It is estimated that atherosclerosis accounts for more than 75% of all deaths from cardiovascular disease.

Pfizer's Lipitor® Shown to Stop Progression of Plaque Build-Up in Arteries, New Study Shows. Press Release, Orlando, Florida, November 13, 2003.

4. Celebrex® linked to lower incidence of lesions

According to a clinical study using capsule endoscopy to examine volunteers' gastrointestinal (GI) tracts, the incidence of ulcer-like lesions in the small bowel was nine times higher in healthy volunteers who took a combination of older anti-inflammatory medicine and a gastroprotective agent, compared with the standard daily dose of Celebrex® (celecoxib). "In this study, we saw that naproxen was associated with medication-induced damage in the small bowel, even when combined with an acid-reducing agent that is often used to protect patients from such lesions," said Dr. Jay Goldstein, professor of medicine at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

How does it apply to your practice? "These data show that celecoxib is less likely to cause lesions in the digestive tract. The study shows us that, in addition to upper GI safety, use of this drug is actually associated with lower rates of small bowel ulcers as well," Dr. Goldstein said. D_x

Celebrex® Linked to Ninefold Lower Incidence of Ulcer-Like Bowel Lesions, Compared With a Combination of Older Medicines Usually Used to Protect the Gut. Press Release, Baltimore, Maryland, October 13, 2003.