

FDA OKs Anti-Angina Agent

The FDA has approved ranolazine (Ranexa) for patients with chronic angina who haven't responded to other anti-angina drugs, such as long-acting nitrates, calcium channel blockers, or beta-blockers. Ranolazine is the first new anti-angina medication in more than a decade.

Exactly how ranolazine works isn't completely understood. In two clinical trials, the drug reduced the number of angina attacks patients experienced per week and improved their ability to exercise. In both studies, the drug appeared to work better in men than it did for women. The most common side effects are dizziness, headaches, constipation, and nausea.

U.S. Food & Drug Administration. "FDA approves new treatment for chest pain." 2006. www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2006/NEW01306.html (27 Feb. 2006).

Antibiotics In Infancy Elevate Asthma Risk

Infants who receive at least one course of antibiotics in the first year of life are more likely to develop asthma in childhood, according to a recent meta-analysis.

Researchers looked at seven studies that included a total of 12,082 children. Just over 1,800 children developed asthma. Compared to those who were not exposed to antibiotics before age 1, infants treated with at least one antibiotic were about twice as likely to develop asthma by age 18. Multiple courses of antibiotics were associated with an even greater risk.

Researchers cautioned that their findings don't prove that antibiotics cause asthma and said large-scale prospective studies are needed.

Marra, F., Lynd, L., et al. (2006). Does antibiotic exposure during infancy lead to the development of asthma? *Chest*, 129(3), 610.

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Error Watch

Avoid Med Errors In Radiology

Breakdowns in communication can lead to medication errors in patients having a radiologic procedure, according to the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP). Part of the problem, says the USP, may be that clinicians in radiology are so focused on the procedure that they pay too little attention to continuum of care issues like the drugs the patient is taking.

From 2000 through 2004, the USP's MEDMARX program received 2,032 reports of med errors occurring in a radiology or nuclear medicine department or cardiac cath lab. About 81% of them reached the patient, and 12% caused harm. Most involved contrast agents, anti-clotting agents, sedatives, and narcotics.

In one case, a nurse removed the tubing from the two IV pumps of a patient brought to radiology to properly position him for a procedure with fluoroscopy. After the procedure, the tubing was reconnected to the wrong pumps. As a result, fentanyl that was supposed to infuse at a rate of 2 ml/hour infused at 125 ml/hour. The patient received 75 ml of the drug before the error was discovered.

The USP recommends including radiologic departments in hospitals' medication safety programs and suggests that facilities review their drug dispensing procedures, particularly those related to interrupting and resuming IV infusions and overriding automated drug dispensing devices.

THE AUTHOR

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