

Corporate News

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New study: Common GI Medications Drive Risk of Heart Attack in Patients Taking Widely Prescribed Cardiovascular Drug

Proton Pump Inhibitors mimic “bad genes,” increase risk of major cardiovascular event by more than 50 percent for patients taking Plavix

Study provides shot in the arm for advocates of genetic testing in association with medication prescribing

FRANKLIN LAKES, NJ, November 12, 2008 – Proponents of genetic testing to improve medication prescribing garnered significant support for their cause today as a major study released at the 2008 Scientific Sessions of the American Heart Association reported an increased risk for heart attack in patients taking Plavix and proton pump inhibitors together.

In the largest study of its kind to date, researchers at Medco Health Solutions, Inc. (NYSE: MHS) report that proton pump inhibitors (PPI) increase the risk of heart attack and stroke by more than 50 percent for people taking Plavix by mimicking a defect in an important gene responsible for metabolizing the cardiovascular drug. The defective gene, according to researchers, renders the medication virtually useless in many patients, resulting in significantly greater risk.

The findings bolster the growing evidence of risk associated with Plavix, the second-largest selling drug worldwide, and advance the case for development and use of genetic tests in association with medication prescribing.

“For years, we’ve known that cardiovascular disease risk is based heavily on what’s in your genes,” said Dr. Robert Epstein, lead study author, chief medical officer, Medco. “This study supports the position that what you take to treat those conditions and their risk factors is equally a function of your genetics.”

Study details

Researchers tracked 16,690 patients who had undergone percutaneous coronary intervention such as stent placement or balloon angioplasty, and had started taken clopidogrel as post-operative maintenance therapy. Of the patients in the study, 9,862 patients were taking clopidogrel alone; and 6,828 patients were taking clopidogrel and a PPI. Researchers tracked the two groups in the study for a 12-month period using medical and pharmacy claims data.

Results of the study were striking: patients with no preceding CV events taking PPIs with clopidogrel showed a 32.5 percent incidence of a major CV event within one year -- a 53 percent higher incidence

than in patients taking just clopidogrel. The figures were equally striking in patients with one preceding major CV event.

“These findings clearly illustrate the absolute necessity for further study and rapid development of tests that could identify the millions of people with these genetic deficiencies,” said Dr. Epstein.

Genetic deficiencies and Plavix: A prescription for disaster

As many as 1 in 25 people worldwide are born with a defective version of a gene called cytochrome P450 2C19. The gene produces an enzyme in the liver that metabolizes many prescription drugs, including Plavix.

When Plavix is metabolized in the body, it produces agents that prevent clotting and blockages in blood vessels. However, people born with a defective version of the gene can't metabolize the medication, rendering it useless and putting them at risk for a major CV event including stroke, heart attack, angina and coronary artery disease.

About Medco

Medco Health Solutions, Inc. (NYSE:MHS) is the nation's leading pharmacy benefit manager based on its 2007 total net revenues of more than \$44 billion. Medco's prescription drug benefit programs, covering approximately one-in-five Americans, are designed to drive down the cost of pharmacy health care for private and public employers, health plans, labor unions and government agencies of all sizes, for individuals served by the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program, and those served by Medco's specialty pharmacy segment, Accredo Health Group. **Medco, the world's most advanced pharmacy®**, is positioned to serve the unique needs of patients with chronic and complex conditions through its **Medco Therapeutic Resource Centers®**, including its enhanced diabetes pharmacy care practice through the Liberty acquisition. Medco is the highest-ranked independent pharmacy benefit manager on the 2008 Fortune 100 list. On the Net: <http://www.medcohealth.com>.

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