



patients need to be watched after for a longer period of time.”

Brooks added that the findings should alert physicians and others involved in poststroke care that these patients probably need more intensive therapy than they have been receiving. “A typical patient will see a stroke physician for a year and then be sent to a primary care physician,” Brooks said. “But the primary care physician will be more concerned with treating emerging comorbidities as these patients get older, and they may not notice all the residual effects of the stroke.”

Wolfe says he hopes his findings will help direct future research. “Through our follow-up and assessment of cognition, depression, and activities of daily living, we can start to model which people will have these poor outcomes,” Wolfe said. “We now need to develop good predicative factors such as perhaps living alone, or having a right-sided stroke, or whatever. We also show the need for long-term studies of the efficacy of therapies, which are often approved based on 1-year studies.” □

Diabetes Drug May Be Associated With Increase in Risk of Bladder Cancer

Joan Stephenson, PhD

THE USE OF THE DIABETES DRUG pioglitazone for more than 1 year may be associated with an increased risk of bladder cancer, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warned on June 15.

The FDA is advising health care professionals to not use pioglitazone in patients with active bladder cancer and to prescribe the drug with caution for patients with a prior history of bladder cancer, weighing the benefits of blood glucose control “against the unknown risks for cancer recurrence” (<http://tinyurl.com/3owghao>).

The FDA also advised health professionals to counsel patients to report any signs or symptoms that may be due to bladder cancer (such as blood in the urine, urinary urgency, pain during urination, or back or abdominal pain) and to encourage patients to read the medication guide that accompanies the drug.

The warning is based on the FDA’s review of data from an ongoing, 10-year epidemiological study. Results based on 5 years of data showed that although pioglitazone use was not

associated with an overall increased risk of bladder cancer, there was an increase in the risk of the malignancy among patients with the longest exposure to pioglitazone and in those exposed to the highest cumulative dose of the drug.

In addition to the ongoing study, another epidemiological study conducted in France suggested that pioglitazone use is associated with a risk of bladder cancer, and that country has suspended the use of pioglitazone based on this study’s findings, the FDA said. In addition, Germany has warned that pioglitazone should not be prescribed for patients who have not previously used the drug.

The new information about the risk of bladder cancer will be added to the warnings and precautions section of the label for medications containing pioglitazone. The agency also noted that the patient medication guide for these medicines will be revised to include information on the risk of bladder cancer.

The FDA said that it will continue to evaluate data from the ongoing US study and that it will also conduct a comprehensive review of the results from the French study. □

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FDA Is “Extraordinarily Slow”

Critics of high-dose simvastatin (Zocor) questioned why the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) waited so long to ban the drug for new patients.

Cleveland Clinic cardiologist Steven E. Nissen, MD, wrote in a 2004 JAMA editorial that the 80 mg/d formulation increased the risk of muscle injury and was no more effective in preventing cardiovascular events than lower doses. A 2008 study came to similar conclusions. “The agency is extraordinarily slow to act on safety issues and has compromised patients,” Nissen said after the FDA’s June 8 announcement.

<http://tinyurl.com/672jmu8>

Poultry Drug Sales Suspended

Increased levels of a known carcinogen in broiler chickens given 3-Nitro (Roxarsone) prompted the drug’s manufacturer to voluntarily suspend its sale.



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The drug, which can prevent intestinal tract infections, contains noncarcinogenic organic arsenic. But it can transform into carcinogenic inorganic arsenic. A recent FDA study found that chickens treated with 3-Nitro had higher levels of inorganic arsenic in the liver than untreated chickens.

<http://tinyurl.com/3dcj5y9>

A Workout for the Brain

Moderate-to-intense exercise might help prevent so-called silent strokes.

In a new study, participants with the highest levels of physical activity were 40% less likely to have silent strokes than those who engaged in light or no exercise. Silent strokes—infarctions that cause brain tissue death with no outward symptoms—are linked to an increased risk of falls, memory problems, dementia, and major stroke.

<http://tinyurl.com/4xnrxrc>

Indoor Risks of Climate Change

Climate change is likely to affect indoor environments in ways that may have unexpected health consequences.

The Institute of Medicine warned that the safety of new building materials and methods designed to resist extreme weather has not been adequately evaluated. Some could create new indoor health risks or worsen existing ones, including secondhand smoke and chemical emissions from various products.

<http://tinyurl.com/3foegbb>

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