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## Jefferson Cardiology Association Happenings

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### **Safety of New Blood Thinners Compared to Coumadin**

In the recent past, new drugs have become available that can be alternatives to Coumadin. Recently published information compared the safety of these drugs compared to Coumadin. Three studies evaluating 44,563 patients were evaluated. Patients randomized to the new medications had a reduced risk of stroke and blood clots sent to other body organs. There was also better survival and lesser chance of bleeding into the head. Overall these drugs appear more effective for prevention of stroke and blood clots sent elsewhere in the body in patients with atrial fibrillation. These drugs would appear to be attractive alternatives to Coumadin.

### **Robotic Mitral Valve Surgery**

There has been much interest in minimally invasive mitral valve surgery using robot technology. There is limited information comparing conventional and minimally invasive mitral valve surgery results. A recent study from the University of Pennsylvania compared 39 patients with conventional sternum splitting surgery with 25 patients undergoing minimally invasive surgery with a limited right chest approach. Effective mitral valve repairs were performed in the minimally invasive surgical group. Time of surgery was longer in the minimally invasive group but transfusions were reduced. Patients with the minimally invasive approach had shorter hospital stays.

### **Challenges Surrounding Blood Thinners Post Stents**

Patients receiving stents and especially drug-eluting stents are faced

with the question: How long should blood thinners be given and are risks of these medications greater over time than the benefits? Patients are also faced with decisions about what to do with these medications if surgical or dental procedures are required.

Currently, patients receiving coronary stents are told to take aspirin and Plavix or Effient for at least one year. Is this long enough or too long? An Italian study published in the April 24<sup>th</sup> issue of *Circulation* finds no difference in outcomes between patients treated with dual blood thinners for six months compared to those treated for 24 months. The risk for hemorrhage was increased in those treated for 24 months. Previous studies from Korea showed no additional benefit from more prolonged dual agent treatment.

An editorial in the same issue argues for 12-month dual agent therapy for drug-eluting stents with longer treatment for patients with particularly complex areas of blockage or technically difficult stent placement. Current large studies are now in progress that may definitively answer this question.

Stent patients on dual blood thinners may be told not to stop the medications during the first year. What do these people do if they need dental extractions?

A Korean study evaluated stent patients needing dental extractions. One hundred patients had dental extractions without stopping their blood thinners. These patients were compared with patients not taking blood thinners. There was no difference in bleeding or outcomes. The researchers concluded that

dental extraction could be safely performed in stent patients without stopping their blood thinners.

**Happy Memorial Day!!**

We would like to wish everyone and their families a safe and happy Memorial Day holiday!!

**No-Bake Fresh Strawberry Pie**

25 Chocolate wafers (such as Nabisco's Famous Chocolate Wafers)  
3 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped  
2 teaspoons canola oil  
Cooking spray  
6 ounces 1/3-less-fat cream cheese, softened  
1/3 cup powdered sugar  
3/4 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 cups frozen fat-free whipped topping, thawed  
2 tablespoons seedless strawberry fruit spread  
1 tablespoon Chambord  
1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice  
1 pound small strawberries, hulled and cut in half

1. Place chocolate wafers in a food processor, and process until finely ground. Place the chopped chocolate in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on HIGH for 45 seconds or until chocolate melts, stirring every 15 seconds. Add melted chocolate and oil to processor; process until well combined. Gently press the mixture into bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch pie plate. Place in freezer 15 minutes or until set.

2. Place cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla in a medium bowl; beat with a mixer at medium speed until smooth. Fold in whipped topping. Carefully spread over bottom of crust. Place fruit spread in a large microwave-safe bowl; microwave on HIGH for 10 seconds or until softened. Add Chambord and juice; stir with a whisk until smooth. Add berry halves; toss to combine. Arrange berry halves over pie. Chill for 30 minutes before serving.

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