

## Jefferson Cardiology Association Happenings

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### **Alternative for Blood Thinners In Atrial Fibrillation**

Atrial fibrillation is the most common rhythm disturbance treated by cardiologists. This rhythm abnormality may be present in 2% of the general population but over 10% of persons above age 80 with increased prevalence in the elderly. The major concern regarding this rhythm is the risk for clots to be sent to the body in those at risk. This can result in strokes, as well as a threat to limbs, kidneys and digestive organs.

Traditionally, treatment has consisted of Coumadin and recently a number of new blood thinning medications have come onto the market. Yet there are persons with atrial fibrillation who can't take blood thinners. Such persons may be at risk for internal bleeding in the intestinal tract, urinary system or into the brain.

There has been excitement about several types of devices as an alternative to blood thinners. These devices have been designed to isolate the left atrial appendage, a small sac in the left atrium, where clots develop.

Under intense review is the Watchman device. This involves a cage device passed through the leg to the right atrium and this crosses a thin area to the left atrium. Then the device is positioned to cover the left atrial appendage.

There has been research to support the use of the Watchman device. It is possible that this would be available for use if the company that created this product only requested an indication for those unable to take blood thinners.

However, the company wishes much broader indication and a much larger market. The company is requesting an indication that the product is equally effective as Coumadin. This request has put much pressure on the FDA and the product is now in its third FDA review. Possibly this device may be cleared by January 2015. If the device is labeled as equivalent to warfarin, then the market for this product could be huge given the number of atrial fibrillation patients at risk.

Other companies have devices to seal off the left atrial appendage. A strikingly different product is the Lariat device. This device is placed through the skin and employs a snare to close the appendage. After the appendage is sealed, the appendage dies without creating a problem.

Time will tell how the different devices fare but help appears on the horizon for atrial fibrillation patients who can't take blood thinners.

### **Stopping Beta Blockers After Heart Attack**

Traditionally, medications called beta blockers have been given long term for heart attack victims. These medications include such commonly prescribed medications as metoprolol, atenolol, carvedilol and propranolol. These drugs were thought to reduce heart attack damage and help long-term survival. Research to support this long-term therapy was done before current interventions with stents for heart attack victims.

A French study presented at the recently concluded European Society of Cardiology challenged this practice.

This study followed heart attack victims after treatment with stents who had normal heart muscle and no signs of heart failure. These patients were taken off beta blockers after one year of treatment. After 5 years, those taken off beta blockers did not have a significantly different outcome than those still taking the beta blockers. The study involved more than 2700 patients.

As a result of this study, revisions were made in the guidelines of the European Society of Cardiology regarding treatment for heart attack victims.

#### **Home Blood Pressure Reading**

A recent report from the Mayo Clinic demonstrated the value of home blood pressure reading as superior to office reading. The study involved 20,000 hypertensive patients with baseline blood pressure readings in clinic of 154/87 and at home of 151/87. The medications were then intensified for better control.

pressure. The lowest risk involved those with morning blood pressure under 125mm of mercury systolic. Risks were increased over twofold if morning blood pressure was over 145mm of mercury systolic regardless of office blood pressure.

#### **Staff Birthdays**

We would like to extend a very Happy Birthday to Dave Ryckman, office manager and Dr. Gennady Geskin. Hope you had a great day!!

#### **Happy Labor Day!!**

We would like to wish everyone and their families a very happy and safe Labor Day!



Most predictive of future stroke  
or cardiac event was morning blood

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