Jefferson Cardiology Association Happenings

Amiodarone and Cancer

Recently reports appeared in the media about a relationship between amiodarone and cancer. Amiodarone is widely recognized as the most effective drug available to maintain persons with a history of atrial fibrillation in normal rhythm. The use of this medication is limited to persons who have severe heart disease or who have failed other medications. This drug has also been used treating life-threatening ventricular rhythm disturbances especially in emergencies. The limited use results from the association with lung, liver, thyroid and rarely eye complications that largely appear dose related.

In the April 8 issue of Cancer, a study was published online from Taiwan evaluating amiodarone and the risk of cancer. Using the Taiwan National Health Insurance Research database, patients treated with amiodarone between 1997-2008 were evaluated excluding those with a history of cancer. In this study 6418 persons were enrolled for an average follow-up of 2.57 years. Of these persons, 280 developed cancer. There was a greater incidence of cancer in men than women. Also, the risk of cancer was dose related. The authors concluded that there may be an increased dose-related risk of cancer in men treated with amiodarone. This information appears very preliminary and needs more definitive future studies before judgments are made about the drug’s safety for widespread usage.

Cardiovascular Benefit of Mediterranean Diet

There has been much publicity about the study in the February 25 issue of the New England Journal of Medicine evaluating the effects of the Mediterranean diet on cardiovascular outcomes. This study was done in Spain and included persons with Type 2 diabetes or 3 major risk factors. The participants were randomized to one of the 3 dietary interventions. One group was randomized to a Mediterranean diet supplemented with extra virgin olive oil. Another group was given a Mediterranean diet supplemented with nuts. The third group had their usual diet.

The Mediterranean diet included olive oil, nuts, fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, legumes, tomato and onion sauce, white meat and wine with meals. Foods that were discouraged included soda drinks, commercial bakery goods, sweets, spread fats as well as red and processed meat. A low fat diet was recommended for the control group.

After 5 years there was a 30% lower incidence of heart attack, stroke and cardiovascular death in the 2 groups consuming the Mediterranean diet. As the study was performed in Spain, it was suspected that all participants followed a Mediterranean diet prior to this study. Thus the idea was proposed that the supplemental foods including the extra virgin olive oil and the nuts were the major reason for the benefits in the observed Mediterranean diet groups.

For those interested in getting more information about the Mediterranean diet or recipes, there is extensive information on the internet. There is
listing of foods, recipes, meal plans, cookbooks, shopping lists as well as weight loss diets. Contact our office if any questions remain.

Staff News

God Bless America

On behalf of Jefferson Cardiology Associates, our deepest sympathies and prayers go out to those who lost their lives, were injured, their families and to the city of Boston after the tragedy that occurred during the Boston marathon.

Please join us in wishing Kim Gray, receptionist, a very Happy Birthday. We hope you have a very special birthday.