



## Rosiglitazone and macular edema

As noted in Box 1 in the article by Claire Kendall and Eric Wooltorton,<sup>1</sup> long-standing diabetes mellitus, poor diabetes control and insulin therapy are by themselves risk factors for macular edema. Furthermore, only 1 of the 9 cases of visual impairment reported in Canada for patients taking rosiglitazone was clearly associated with macular edema, and in that case the problem was resolved by discontinuation. The questions thus arise of whether macular edema (especially if it is asymptomatic) is an absolute contraindication to rosiglitazone therapy and whether every patient with diabetes must be subjected to ophthalmologic evaluation before starting this drug.

Although adverse symptoms may diminish upon discontinuation of rosiglitazone, the potential for loss of glycemic control must also be considered. In such situations, what is the risk-benefit ratio for continuation of rosiglitazone therapy, especially if good glycemic control has been achieved?

Perhaps there is a role for “drug holidays” with rosiglitazone. In this regard, macular edema induced by latanoprost, echthiophate iodide or nicotinic acid is usually reversible upon discontinuation of the drug,<sup>2</sup> which can be reintroduced later.

Systemic factors that may contribute to the progression of diabetic macular edema are blood glucose control, hy-

pertension, nephropathy and proteinuria. It has been suggested that use of an angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor be considered for patients with diabetic retinopathy and nephropathy.<sup>3</sup> ACE inhibitors are already indicated for microalbuminuria of diabetes, but it is not known whether they would be beneficial in preventing macular edema as well.

**Gurusamy Sivagnanam**

School of Medicine  
Asian Institute of Medicine, Science  
and Technology  
Kedah, Malaysia

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3. Chang S. Recent developments in the treatment of diabetic macular edema. Proceedings of 11th International Conference on Health Problems Related to the Chinese; 2002 May 25-26; New York. p. 25-27. Available: [www.fcmsdocs.org/Conference/11th/Diabetic%20Macular%20Edema.pdf](http://www.fcmsdocs.org/Conference/11th/Diabetic%20Macular%20Edema.pdf) (accessed 2006 May 2).

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### SMART therapy

The Salmeterol Multicenter Asthma Research Trial (SMART)<sup>1</sup> reinforces important lessons regarding the appropriate use of long-acting  $\beta$ -agonists. The trial was stopped early because of increased hazard of asthma, respiratory death or life-threatening events in the salmeterol arm. Eric Wooltorton's Health and Drug Alert<sup>2</sup> based on data from this study warns physicians of this hazard but fails to put the results in the context of the greater body of research examining the role of long-acting  $\beta$ -agonists in asthma.

Studies examining the use of these drugs in combination with inhaled corticosteroids have consistently demonstrated benefit, with significant reductions in severe asthma exacerbations.<sup>3-6</sup> Furthermore, the SMART trial failed to

show a significant hazard in patients using inhaled corticosteroids at baseline. Despite this, Wooltorton discounts the role of inhaled corticosteroids as a determinant of outcome, stating “Although there is interest in attributing differences in outcomes to differences in baseline rates of inhaled corticosteroid use at enrolment, the trials were not adequately designed to assess this.”

Although this statement is true, the message is not. The Canadian asthma consensus guidelines,<sup>7</sup> in agreement with recommendations worldwide, emphasize the need for adequate anti-inflammatory therapy before starting add-on treatment, including long-acting  $\beta$ -agonists. This was not the case in the SMART trial.

Administration of long-acting  $\beta$ -agonists in combination with inhaled corticosteroids, preferably in a single inhalation device, remains the most effective strategy for prevention of severe asthma exacerbations in those with persistent disease. If we are to reduce asthma morbidity and mortality, it is critical for this message to be understood by clinicians and not confused by reports of inappropriate use.

**Alan Bell**

Department of Family and Community  
Medicine

Humber River Regional Hospital  
Toronto, Ont.

Member

Canadian Asthma Consensus  
Guideline Committee

**R. Andrew McIvor**

Professor of Medicine  
McMaster University

Ontario Chair

Canadian Asthma Consensus  
Guideline Committee

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## Corrections

A recent issue of *CMAJ* mistakenly included a death notice for Dr. Archibald McNeill Johnson. We sincerely regret this error.

### REFERENCE

1. Deaths. *CMAJ* 2006;174(13):1935.

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In a recent News article,<sup>1</sup> the correct *n* value for anesthesia should have been 1014 as opposed to 1104.

### REFERENCE

1. Baerlocher MO, Detsky AS. Who's doing what? Time spent on committee and administrative work. *CMAJ* 2006;174(12):1703.

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A News article concerning the licensure of nurse practitioners in Canada<sup>1</sup> stated erroneously that nurse practitioners' liability protection is provided by the

Canadian Nurses Association. In fact, it is provided by the Canadian Nurses Protective Society. The *CMAJ* apologizes for any inconvenience this error may have caused.

### REFERENCE

1. Hass J. Nurse practitioners now able to work across Canada. *CMAJ* 2006;174(7):911-2.

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