

The Prudent Prescriber

Phil Mohler, M.D. • pmohler@pcpgj.com

3150 N. 12th Street • P.O. Box 10700 • Grand Junction, CO 81502-5517 • 245-1220

If you would prefer receiving The Prudent Prescriber by e-mail, send a message to pmohler@pcpgj.com

September 2007

Pharm Reps ≠ Rational Prescribing

(PR)



(RP)

Lybrel: First FDA Approved Continuous BCP

(ethinyl estradiol 20mcg & levonorgestrel 90mcg)

In Clinical Trials:

- 18% of patients stopped therapy because of break through bleeding (8.2% with Seasonique).
- The incidence of spotting/bleeding was 60%, 48% and 41% during cycles 6, 9 and 13, respectively.
- 59% of women were amenorrheic at the end of 13 cycles. 21% had breakthrough bleeding that required sanitary protection.



Pros:

- In study of 2800 women who characterized themselves as having "heavy flow", estimated \$1692 annual wages lost from work (Cote et al Obstet Gynecol 2002; 100:683-7).
- Decreased headaches, irritability, anemia, dysmenorrhea with extended regimens (poor studies).
- Contraceptive efficacy >98%.

Cons:

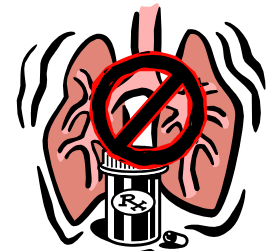
- Some women depend on their periods as reassurance that they are not pregnant (fallible).
- Taking continuous contraceptives will expose women to three additional months of estrogen and progesterone per year.
- Long term risks/benefits are not known.

Method	Cost per month
Lybrel	\$55 (\$715/year)
Generic Seasonale	\$43
Most branded BCPs	~\$60s
Generic BCPs	\$18-\$25 (\$378/year used continuously)

My Take:

This is a reasonable strategy for some women. The trade off is no bleeding vs. unpredictable bleeding, even after one year. If you are going to prescribe continuous BCPs, it makes economic sense not to prescribe Lybrel, but to use generic BCPs and throw out the pills from the last week of each packet. The downside is that most health insurance will not pay for more than 12 or 13 cycles of BCPs per year.

Antibiotics do NOT

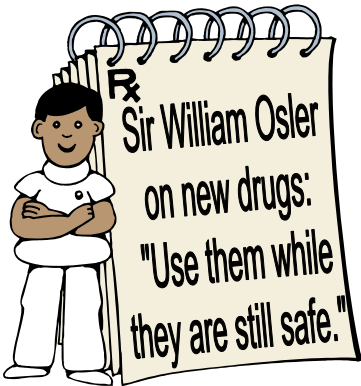


help acute bronchitis

β-blockers in post-MI save lives

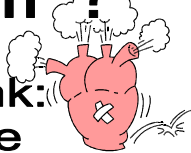


Pill splitters save big

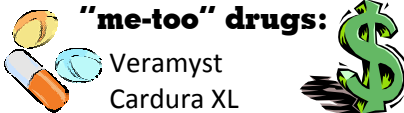


CHF?

Think:
Ace
Aldactone
B-blocker
Dig
Diuretic



Avoid these expensive "me-too" drugs:



Veramyst
Cardura XL
Ultram ER
Ambien CR
Paxil CR
Xopenex
Coreg CR

Treat diabetics BP to 130/80



now available
on the
Generic Marquee

Coreg → carvedilol
Toprol XR → metoprolol ER
Lotrel → amlodipine/benazepril
Norvasc → amlodipine
Ambien → zolpidem
Flonase → fluticasone nasal

AHA Guidelines for Treating Hypertension



Why New Guidelines?

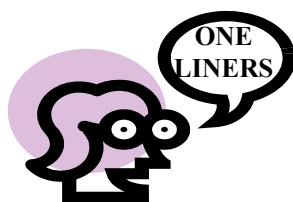
A meta-analysis of ~1,000,000 adults followed for 12 years:

For each increase of 20 mm Hg of systolic and 10 mm of diastolic pressure, over the range of 115/75 to 185/115, the risk of a fatal cardiovascular event (MI & stroke) doubles!

- **<130/80** will be the new goal for patients with
 - ✓ coronary artery disease,
 - ✓ CHD equivalents: diabetes mellitus, chronic kidney disease, carotid or peripheral vascular disease,
 - ✓ or multiple CV risk factors.
- **<120/80** will be the new goal for patients with CHF, using drugs that prevent CV events.
- Beta-blockers are no longer recommended for initial treatment of uncomplicated hypertension. There is weak evidence for cardio protection with beta-blockers in the absence of a compelling indication (i.e. angina, CHF).

Indication	BP Goal	Initial Tx for Htn	Beta -blockers
Low risk for CAD	<140/90	ACEI, ARB, CCB, or thiazide	Don't use 1st line
High risk for CAD	<130/80	ACEI, ARB, CCB, or thiazide	Don't use 1st line
With CAD	<130/80	BB and ACEI or ARB	Use 1st line
Heart failure	<120/80 if possible	BB and ACEI or ARB, diuretics, and aldosterone antagonist	Use 1st line

Adapted from the Prescriber's Letter (Aug 2007)



- 👂 The safest SSRI in early pregnancy appears to be fluoxetine (NEJM 2007; 356:2675-2683, case control study, narrow confidence intervals).
- 👂 The HPV vaccine does not demonstrate evidence of clearing or preventing progression of already present HPV types 16/18. (JAMA August 15, 2007). My take: The ACIP guidelines to routinely immunize 11-12 year old girls with HPV vaccine are prudent.
- 👂 The CDC has issued a statement recommending against administering cough and cold medications to children under two years of age. (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5601a1.htm>) Systematic reviews of controlled trials of these medications conclude that they are no more effective than placebo in reducing symptoms. Cough suppressants containing codeine and dextromethorphan have led to adverse events in kids under two years.
- 👂 Chondroitin is no more effective than placebo for controlling pain of osteoarthritis. (Ann Intern Med 2007;146: 580-590).
- 👂 Toprol XL is now available as generic metoprolol ER in all strengths. The generic is still pricey. Remember that generic metoprolol BID is cheap! (\$13-14/mo for 100mg BID)
- 👂 All strengths of generic Coreg, carvedilol, are now being shipped to retail pharmacy outlets by Mylan pharmaceuticals.
- ⚡ **FLASH!** You may hear about the new federal mandate to use tamper-resistant pads for Medicaid prescriptions effective October 1, 2007. **Implementation of this legislation in Colorado is delayed until CMS provides more specific guidelines for "tamper-resistant Rx"**. 😊

DISCLAIMER: The information and statements contained in "The Prudent Prescriber" constitute the opinions of its author, unless otherwise noted. Nothing contained in "The Prudent Prescriber" is intended to demonstrate, indicate or suggest that any person or company is incompetent or unfit. Likewise, nothing contained in "The Prudent Prescriber" is intended to damage the business, business relationships, business dealings or reputation of any person or company.