New Combo Drug for Hypertension

The newly approved drug, Prestalia, is designed to treat patients with hypertension, especially those who do not respond to single drugs. It is a fixed-dose combination of perindopril and amlodipine, similar to the PATH trial's drug combination. The FDA approved Prestalia based on the PATH trial's success in reducing blood pressure.

Response Rate
The PATH trial showed that Prestalia had a 35.8% response rate, compared to 26.6% for the control group. The drug's effectiveness was consistent across different subgroups, including age, gender, and ethnicity.

Impact on Careers
ASN's latest nephrology workforce report indicates a growing interest in nephrology among medical students and residents. The report highlights the importance of mentorship and leadership in retaining and attracting new medical talent.

Industry Spotlight

NephoCheck Test Gauges Risk for AKI

The NephoCheck test system is now being marketed by Ortho Clinical Diagnostics to help identify risk of acute kidney injury (AKI). The urine test is designed to detect both insulin-like growth factor binding protein 7 and tissue inhibitor of metalloproteinases, factors associated with AKI. The test provides a score within 20 minutes that shows a patient's risk for the development of AKI, Ortho noted in an announcement. Patients with a positive NephoCheck risk (greater than the defined cutoff point of 0.3) have a one-in-four to one-in-three chance of developing moderate or severe AKI within 12 hours of assessment, Ortho reported.

The test system may be used along with clinical evaluation in intensive care units to identify patients who currently have or have had within the preceding 24 hours an acute cardiovascular event, respiratory compromise, or both. The test should be used as an aid in the risk assessment for moderate or severe AKI within 12 hours of patient assessment in patients over age 21. For more information about the test, visit www.clinical-diagnostics.com.

New Combo Drug for Hypertension

For the first time, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a fixed-dose antihypertensive pill combining angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor and beta blocker compounds. The drug, named Prestalia, from Symplmed, offers a one-pill treatment for hypertension.

The FDA approved the drug based on phase III data from the PATH trial (Perindopril Amlodipine for the Treatment of Hypertension trial), which demonstrated the fixed-dose combination in one pill was more effective than either compound taken alone for reducing sitting diastolic and sitting systolic blood pressure after six weeks of treatment.

Both drugs alone can cause hypotension, and perindopril can cause swelling of the head and neck. Warnings include not giving diabetic patients aliskiren (a renin inhibitor for primary hypertension) along with ACE inhibitors, including Prestalia, as well as discontinuing Prestalia immediately when a patient learns she is pregnant.

The company has several other combination drugs for hypertension in the pipeline, all containing perindopril, perindopril plus astatavastatin, perindopril plus indapamide, and perindopril plus amlodipine (the two drugs in Prestalia) plus indapamide. Its first product, perindopril erbumine (Aceon), is an antihypertensive drug that can be taken alone or in combination with other classes of hypertension-reducing drugs. Aceon is used to treat patients with high blood pressure and to reduce the risk of heart attack.

Report Details Nephrology Fellow Demographics, Job Market Concerns

By Kurtis Pivert

ASN’s latest nephrology workforce report provides a detailed portrait of future nephrologists and their perceptions of, and experiences in, the current job market. Findings from the 2014 Survey of Nephrology Fellows is the second in a series of workforce studies authored by George Washington University (GWU) investigators. The analysis of the 2014 ASN Nephrology Fellow Survey provides clues about demand for the specialty and a baseline for future research.

The report confirms recent trends in nephrology training. International medical graduates (IMGs) comprised the majority of respondents (64 percent), reflecting the continued decline in the number of US medical graduates (USMGs) choosing the specialty. Despite an increase in women entering nephrology, most of the 1st and 2nd year fellows who answered the survey were men (61 percent). Fellows’ racial and ethnic composition remains unrepresentative of the communities they will serve—only 9 percent of fellow respondents were African American and 8 percent Hispanic.

Distributed to ASN fellow members in June 2014, the survey is an important component of ASN’s ongoing collaboration with GWU to study all aspects of the specialty. Workforce research is one of ASN’s many initiatives to increase interest in nephrology careers. Although this initial survey elicited a low response rate (35.8 percent), the participants’ demographic characteristics were similar to those of all nephrology fellows, according to information from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education database.

“This kind of survey can provide a good picture of the future supply,” said lead author Edward Salsberg, MPA. “The experience of new entrants into the job market can also provide a valuable snapshot of the regional and national demand.”

Job search experiences and market perceptions differed between IMGs and USMGs. IMGs were more likely to practice in a Health Professional Shortage Area and to report difficulties in finding a satisfactory position. USMGs were more likely to note a lack of jobs in desired locations and to perceive more job opportunities nationally than locally.

A substantial proportion of nephrology fellows looking for employment reported changing their plans because of limited practice opportunities (43 percent). Although nephrology fellows’ perceptions of local job opportunities (within 50 miles of their training site) were disappointing (71 percent said there were no, very few, or few nephrology practice opportunities), a vast majority indicated they would still recommend the specialty to medical students and residents (72 percent).

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The report’s release extended a continuing dialogue among the kidney community that started with the disappo...