Ischaemic heart disease

Off-pump CABG after carotid surgery is safe ► Patients with combined coronary and carotid artery disease are at high risk of perioperative stroke and myocardial infarction. Of 2556 patients scheduled for off-pump bypass surgery (CABG), 82 patients with >70% carotid stenosis were found by screening with duplex scanning (23% of the group). The mean age of the patients was 63 years. Carotid endarterectomy was immediately followed by off-pump CABG. There was no hospital mortality. One patient had perioperative myocardial infarction and another a transient ischaemic attack. It seems that, in the correct hands, combined procedures can be safe.


β Blockers as anti-inflammatory agents? ► Aspirin and pravastatin lower C reactive protein (CRP) concentrations and reduce vascular risk, underlining the importance of inflammation in destabilising coronary plaques. β Blockers are thought to work by reducing arrhythmia related deaths in patients with heart failure and ischaemic heart disease (IHD). Even excluding patients with contraindications to β blockers, a survey of 333 consecutive patients with IHD showed CRP concentrations 40% lower in those on β blocker treatment. How they lower CRP is not clear.


Statins improve bone density ► As well being good for your heart, statins were found to increase bone density and reduce fracture risk by 40%. This effect was independent of height, weight, lifestyle, and other medication. Coupled with the fact that coronary heart disease (CHD) risk is lowered on a statin even if your initial cholesterol is normal, perhaps all patients over 65 should be on one.


Difficult treatment of MI in the >75 age group ► In a cohort of over 2000 patients >75 years old who had a myocardial infarction (MI), only 63% of eligible patients got thrombolysis while 27% of thrombolysis recipients had what are regarded as absolute contraindications to the treatment. The odds ratio of death was 1.57 (95% confidence interval [CI] 1.03 to 2.40, p = 0.04) in those patients with contraindications versus those who did not receive lytic treatment. If aged <80, thrombolysis was associated with reduced mortality, but at age 80–90, the predicted odds of death among thrombolysis recipients versus non-recipients was 1.4–...


Asian children show insulin resistance ► Early atherosclerotic changes can be seen at postmortem examination in children of all races. Indian Asians in the UK as adults have a much higher risk of CHD death than UK whites. The cause for this is still not clear, but insulin resistance may play a part. This insulin resistance appears early in childhood, as shown by this study. Mean insulin concentrations were higher in Asians (percentage difference was 53% [95% CI 14% to 106%] after fasting and 54% [95% CI 19% to 99%] after glucose load), though glucose concentrations were similar. In addition triglycerides concentrations were higher and high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol lower. The relation between insulin concentrations and adiposity was much stronger in Asians, suggesting a tendency to truncal obesity and a worsening insulin resistance.


Hypertension

HOPE for stroke reduction ► Reduction in blood pressure in the HOPE trial with ramipril 10 mg/day was modest (3.8 mm Hg systolic and 2.8 mm Hg diastolic). The relative risk of any stroke was reduced by 32% (156 v 226) in the ramipril group compared with the placebo group, and the relative risk of total stroke was reduced by 61% (17 v 44). Benefits were consistent across baseline blood pressures and all subgroups. Significantly fewer patients on ramipril had cognitive or functional impairment.


LIFE after HOPE ► Thiazides and β blockers are the best assessed interventions in hypertension management. The HOPE trial suggested that angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors may have added benefits beyond blood pressure control. Most physicians would use an angiotensin II receptor blocker (ARB) if an ACE inhibitor was not tolerated. The LIFE trial of >9000 patients with mild to moderate hypertension suggests that losartan (an ARB) reduces the risk of death/MI/cerebrovascular accident over 4.7 years follow up (23.8 per 1000 patient years in the losartan group v 27.9 per 1000 patient years in the atenolol group; relative risk [RR] 0.87, 95% CI 0.77 to 0.98, p = 0.021). There was a significant reduction in stroke (0.75, 95% CI 0.63 to 0.89, p = 0.001) but not MI. Blood pressure reductions were similar in both groups. As in the HOPE trial, the high risk diabetic group gained as much benefit if not more and showed a significant reduction in total mortality (RR 0.61, 95% CI 0.45 to 0.84, p = 0.002) and MI...
**General cardiology**

AICD without electrical testing? ▶ Patients with reduced ejection fractions and ventricular arrhythmias on electrophysiological testing or abnormal signal averaged ECGs live longer with an automatic implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (AICD) than on medical treatment alone. What about putting the device into all patients with a previous MI and poor left ventricular function, and thus avoid any testing? Death rates at 20 months were 19.8% in the conventional treatment group and 14.2% in the AICD group (RR 0.69, 95% CI 0.51 to 0.93, p = 0.016). Although a positive trial, this is less impressive than previous trials using guided therapy (MADIT, AVID). In addition, the survivors went into hospital more often, presumably as they lived long enough to be admitted for heart failure. Further work needs to be done to reduce the cost of the devices and isolate which patients will benefit most for implantation.

**Right heart thromboembolism: treat with thrombolysis? ▶** Echo studies in patients with pulmonary emboli show right heart thromboembolism in between 3–23%, which significantly increases the mortality risk in patients with pulmonary embolism. The optimum management of such patients remains unclear, as no prospective randomised trials have been conducted to compare anticoagulation, thrombolysis, and surgical intervention. In this retrospective analysis of all reported cases from 1966 to 2000, 177 patients were identified with echo diagnosis of right heart thromboembolism. Overall, 20% were treated with anticoagulation, 35% with thrombolysis, and 35% with a surgical procedure (either surgical or percutaneous catheter embolectomy). Age and sex were not predictors of mortality. The mortality rate in patients receiving no treatment, anticoagulation, surgical procedure, and thrombolysis were 100%, 29%, 24%, and 11%, respectively. Although not randomised, these probably are the best data available to guide management.

**Amiodarone is better than lidocaine in the cardiac arrest situation ▶** Which drugs should be used to enhance the chance of conversion to SR in patients who have had the first cycle of advanced cardiac life support and are still in ventricular fibrillation? The answer seems to be amiodarone rather than lidocaine, as 22.8% of 180 patients survived to hospital admission, as compared with 12.0% of 167 patients treated with lidocaine (OR 2.17, 95% CI 1.21 to 3.83, p = 0.009).

**Beware of hyperkalaemia that is not tor.** ▶ This case report highlights a rare cause of spurious hyperkalaemia due to an inherited red cell membrane problem. Old blood samples will have lysed red cells and the serum potassium will be raised. In this condition, blood samples which cool to room temperature leak potassium from red cells giving spurious readings. A sample analysed immediately on a blood gas machine does not have this error. Inappropriate treatment would lead to dangerous hypokalaemia.
The following electronic only articles are published in conjunction with this issue of Heart.

Beneficial effects of biventricular pacing in a patient with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and intraventricular conduction delay
C A Rinaldi, C A Bucknell, J S Gill
The beneficial use of biventricular pacing is reported in a patient with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and intraventricular conduction delay. This resulted in improvements in symptomatic status and exercise tolerance that may be related to cardiac resynchronisation. The improvement in symptoms by biventricular pacing in a patient with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and intraventricular conduction delay is previously undocumented and requires further investigation.
(Heart 2002;87:e6) www.heartjnl.com/cgi/content/full/87/6/e6

Diagnosis of amyloidosis by histological examination of subcutaneous fat sampled at the time of pacemaker implantation
G M Gribbin, J A Gilbertson, P N Hawkins
Atrioventricular conduction disease may occur in a range of conditions. If echocardiography suggests the presence of an infiltrative cardiomyopathy the diagnosis of amyloidosis may be confirmed by subcutaneous fat sampling from the site of pacemaker implantation. This technique requires no additional invasive procedure and confers no extra risk for the patient. Confirmation of amyloidosis provides important prognostic information and may allow specific treatment.
(Heart 2002;87:e7) www.heartjnl.com/cgi/content/full/87/6/e7

Mitrval valve endocarditis in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy: case report and literature review
G Morgan-Hughes, J Motwani
Mitral endocarditis complicating hypertrophic cardiomyopathy occurs predominantly on the left ventricular aspect of the anterior mitral valve leaflet in the presence of outflow tract obstruction. It is a rare condition and the estimated cumulative 10 year probability of developing endocarditis in patients with obstruction is < 5%. Combined mitral valve replacement and septal myectomy has been reported in this setting. A case of community acquired Staphylococcus aureus mitral valve endocarditis is reported in a previously asymptomatic young man with hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy. The potential treatment options are discussed.
(Heart 2002;87:e8) www.heartjnl.com/cgi/content/full/87/6/e8

Nature Medicine; New England Journal of Medicine; Pharmacoeconomics; Thorax

WEB TOP 10

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These articles scored the most hits on Heart’s web site during March 2002
1 Inflammation in acute coronary syndromes
T Mulvihill, J B Foley
March 2002;87:201-4. [Review]
2 The medical management of valvar heart disease
NA Boon, P Bloomfield
April 2002;87:395-400. [Education in Heart]
3 Joint British recommendations on prevention of coronary heart disease in clinical practice
December 1998;80[suppl 2]:S1-29.
4 New coronary imaging techniques: what to expect?
P J de Feyter, K Nieman
March 2002;87:195-7. [Editorial]
5 Which patient should be referred to an electrophysiologist: supraventricular tachycardia
RJ Schilling
March 2002;87:299-304. [Education in Heart]
6 Myocardial molecular biology: an introduction
NJ Brand, PIR Barton
March 2002;87:284-93. [Education in Heart]
7 Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy: management, risk stratification, and prevention of sudden death
WJ McKenna, EB Bavry
February 2002;87:169-76. [Education in Heart]
8 Virtual coronary angiography using multislice computed tomography
S Schroeder, AF Kopp, B Ohnesorge, H Loke-Gie, A Kueettner, A Baumbach, C Herde, CD Clausen, KR Karsch
March 2002;87:205-9. [Cardiovascular medicine]
9 Arrhythmias in adults with congenital heart disease
J K Triedman
April 2002;87:383-9. [Education in Heart]
10 Rapamycin eluting stent: the onset of a new era in interventional cardiology
P W Serruys, E Regar, A J Carter
April 2002;87:305-7. [Editorial]
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