



Dear Colleague:

Here is the latest from the CCJM, including two reports on important but controversial new clinical trials and updates on a variety of common clinical problems.

■ The Hypertension Optimal Treatment (HOT) trial (page 105)

Is lower safer and better? Drs. Vidt and Pohl review the HOT study of aggressive therapy for hypertension. Although lowering of diastolic blood pressure below 80 mm Hg did not result in fewer cardiovascular "events" than less tight control, at least it did not cause *more* events, as some had feared. We need a study of tight systolic control to settle the issue.

■ Invasive vs conservative treatment of non-Q-wave MI (page 100)

Drs. Patel and Moliterno examine the VANQWISH trial, which appears to cast doubt on the value of early aggressive intervention in non-Q-wave myocardial infarction. However, the authors raise issues that should lead to caution in interpreting the results of this study.

■ Stress and heart disease (page 75)

A little stress may not be bad, but evidence is growing that a lot of stress can kill you. Dr. Pashkow reviews the evidence that acute stress can trigger sudden death in patients with coronary artery disease and that chronic stress can contribute to disease progression. He makes a case for stress management as part of a good cardiac rehabilitation program.

■ Back pain in the elderly (page 89)

One of the most common nagging problems affecting older people is low back pain. The cause of such pain is not always benign, and careful evaluation is most important. Dr. Mazanec presents a thoughtful approach to the elderly patient with back pain. An illustration shows some of the common causes of back pain in the elderly.

■ Issues in venous thromboembolism (page 113)

Thromboembolism is common and often tragic in its consequences, yet treatment is fraught with uncertainty. Drs. Carman and Fernandez present the evidence on nine contentious issues in thromboembolism, and weigh in with their own recommendations.

■ IM Board Review (page 84)

Sludge is an unpleasant thing, including biliary sludge. Drs. Morrow and Conwell discuss diagnosis and treatment of idiopathic recurrent pancreatitis caused by biliary sludge.

■ Assisted reproduction (page 78)

As more women choose to have babies later in life, the problem of infertility is increasing. Dr. Falcone reviews the latest advances in assisted reproduction, and briefly discusses some of the ethical issues.

As always, we are interested in what you think of the *Journal*, and your ideas for future topics.

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